

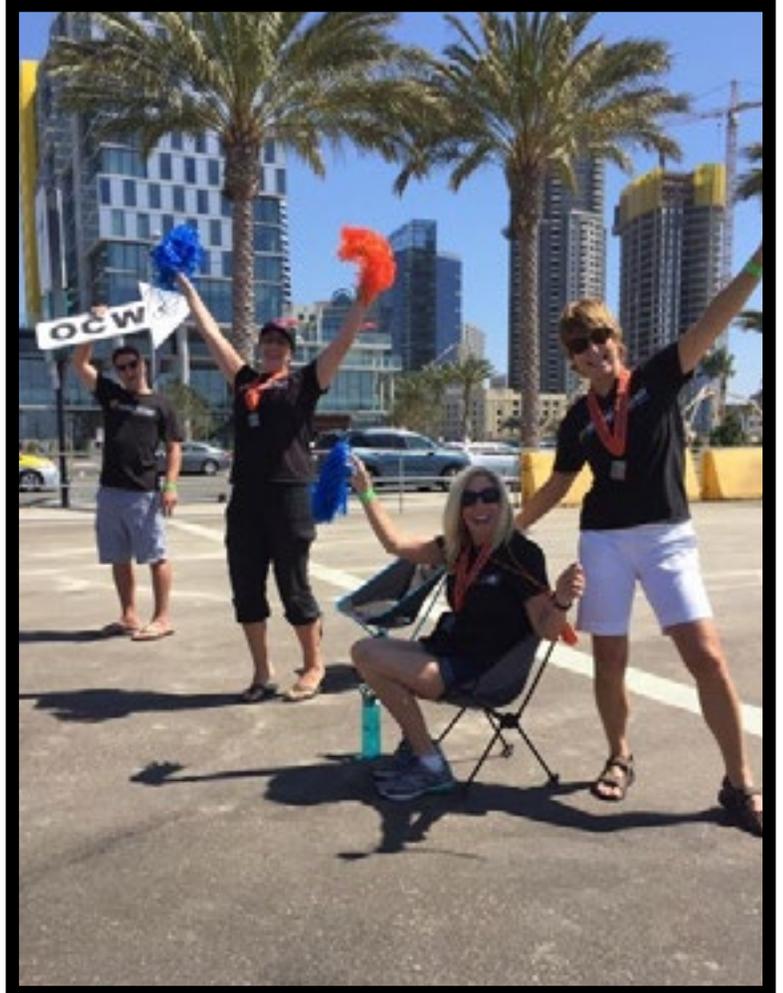
AMTRAK CENTURY 2016 DELIVERED HAPPY AND WELL-FED CYCLISTS BACK TO IRVINE.....

By Mike Lee

I am in awe of the efforts and dedication that our volunteer team have in assisting our riders at all the rest stops. From the first step at registration to the train ride home. This is such an incredible and unique event that many organizations have contacted me to replicate this.

OCW has designed, engineered and developed such an event that others can only try to attempt, but they lack one thing, our volunteer team. These individuals are the backbone of our success and continuation of this event. I cannot thank them enough for their efforts and unselfish time to help make this event what it has become.

The ride itself was one of those perfect So Cal days, clear skies and a slight tailwind, what more can a cyclist ask for? My personal favorite area is the section after RS3 (lunch), PCH, the ocean to my right and wide lanes so all could enjoy our spectacular scenery that we almost take for granted. I invite you to review the comments on the website for what we may improve and incorporate for next year. I have personally made several



trips into San Diego over the years to inspect potential route changes. None really cut the mustard but come close. We are always open to suggestions. Please contact me by email:

mike.lee@ocwheelmen.org

I am looking forward to next year and another edition of this signature event. Keep training and improving for 2017.

Check out more pictures and comments from Amtrak 2016 starting on page 4.

OCW CLUB LINKS

HOME PAGE: www.ocwheelmen.org

CALENDAR: www.ocwheelmen.org/page/show/418357-calendar

OFFICERS: www.ocwheelmen.org/page/show/419328-officers

DIRECTORS: www.ocwheelmen.org/page/show/419332-directors

SUPPORTING MEMBERS: www.ocwheelmen.org/page/show/424483-supporting-memberships

MONTHLY BOARD MEETINGS

Held the first Sunday of each month starting 11am at Carl's Jr., Newport Beach. Take the 405 Freeway to the MacArthur exit. Go south 0.8 miles and turn left on Campus. Go 0.3 miles and turn right into Carl's Jr. (at Von Karman). All Officers and Directors are expected to attend to conduct business. Other interested members may also attend.

MONTHLY BRAINSTORMING PARTIES

Held once a month, typically the last Thursday or Saturday of the month. These special "parties" are a way for OCW members to get together and "brainstorm" articles and ideas for our monthly NewsBlast and quarterly Chain Reaction while enjoying food and beverage. COME JOIN US!

If you would like to host a Brainstorming Party or supply food or beverage please contact Miguel Perea at 714.849.3519. OCW REIMBURSES UP TO \$150!

REGISTRATION FOR OCW EVENTS

All Registration for OCW events require the registrant to be logged in. Be sure to always check for discount codes. You will only see the discount code if you are a current member of OCW. The discount code if applicable will be located on a separate page in the specific event area. To confirm if you are current, check the membership data base. If you do not see the link for the membership data base, your membership has expired by at least a month or more.

The new website, registration code, and discount codes are only visible to current members. The website functions are different and I have learned new ways within this site logic, to apply new and different ways of maintaining privacy for our members from email skimmers and other nefarious internet hacking. I am continually upgrading the website when there are better ways to protect your personal information, but have it available for our members to connect to each other.

Thank you for your continued support and membership to OCW.

Mike Lee, Events

Editors Musings



Michelle Vester, LCI

I can't believe another Amtrak is in the books. Alan and I love captaining rest stop 1 in San Juan Capistrano and greeting all the riders, while working with some terrific volunteers. Each year we seem to get more efficient. All the riders are so appreciative, and of course we love to take care of them!

I hope you enjoy the great pictures in this issue. Not only of Amtrak, but in the other articles. There are some amazing places our members have been over the summer, as well as long past adventures.

Fall is here and with that cooler temperatures and hopefully rain. Actually, Alan and I can't wait for rain so the trails improve. If you're a mountain bike rider or hiker you know what I'm talking about.

So welcome Fall, and I hope you enjoy the last issue of Chain Reaction for 2016.

Enjoy the ride!

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Miguel Perea

from the PRESIDENT



Hello OCW and welcome to the Fall edition of Chain Reaction! Here, in Southern California, the change of seasons may not be as dramatic as that in other parts of the country. We may not feel the changes in temperatures too much, but other changes are definitely happening. The days are getting noticeably shorter, and I seem to be looking for my arm warmers for the early morning rides even though it will get hot in the latter part of most rides. When I lived and rode in the East Coast it got cool early in the Autumn, and I always associated that with the call from the forest to get on my mountain bike. After almost two decades I still have almost a Pavlovian reaction to the coming of the Fall and Winter months, and I find myself looking for opportunities to ride with Alan Vester, our resident Mountain Goat, or just go to the nearest dirt hill. If you want to get on a mountain bike and learn from the best, subscribe to the Mountain Goat newsletter in the OCW website, and Alan will keep you apprised of future mountain bike rides.

The Summer was busy, with hiking on the Grand Canyon, riding the Canadian Rockies, and an exploratory trip to Spain to plan for a future Camino de Santiago, or Way of St. James, pilgrimage. The Camino is a network of routes across Spain and Europe which all lead to Santiago de Compostela, in the northwest of Spain. In the Middle Ages,

these routes were walked as a pilgrimage to the tomb of the apostle St. James. Nowadays, tens of thousands walk or cycle the Camino de Santiago every year in an epic journey of 500 miles. People from all over the world with all kinds of motivations: sport, culture, religion, nature, adventure etc., travel El Camino de Santiago, or parts of it, in a lifetime experience. El Camino de Santiago has been declared World Heritage by UNESCO and the First European Cultural Itinerary. If you are not familiar with the Camino look in the movie "The



Way” on Netflix. Even if you are not interested in the subject, It is still a good flick, starring Martin Sheen.

The Grand Canyon hike was led by the intrepid and always entertaining Stuart “Scout” Gaston, who seems to be on a quest to make sure that our illustrious VP, John Renowden, experiences everything that living in SoCal has to offer. Despite the explicit warnings on the National Parks website, and the repeated cautionary advice of our wise fourth member, Randy Kiefer, we planned to go down the South Kaibab trail to the Colorado River, at the bottom of the Canyon, and up the Bright Angel trail to the South Rim in ONE day. More than 5 Million people visited the Grand Canyon last year and only 30 thousand hiked to the bottom and back to the Rim in a day. Also, more than 300 people had to be rescued from this, maybe, not-so-wise endeavor, as Randy reminded us. Alas, years of cycling in Orange County prepared us well, and we made it in under 12 hours. We lucked out with a relatively cool day in the middle of May, which made it all the more pleasant. And the views made it all worth it.

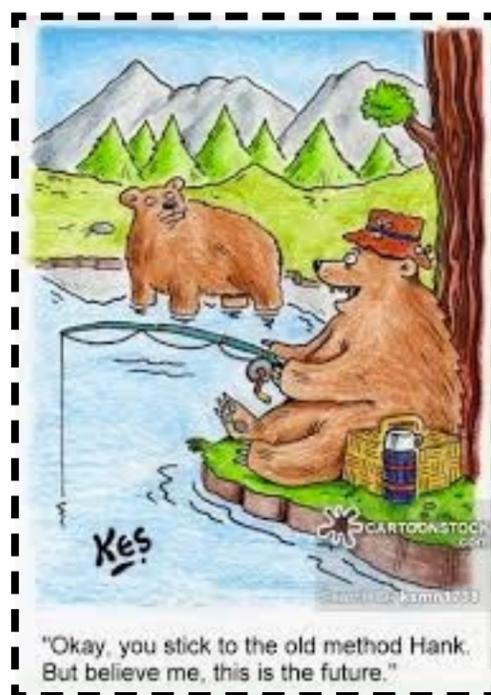
In July we went to Calgary, on the Eastern side of

the Canadian Rocky Mountains, and in eight days a group of mostly Southern California cyclists rode West, to Kamloops, over some of the most beautiful and striking terrain in North America. Lake Louise, Banff, Glacier National Park (Canada) and the Icefields Parkway made an indelible memory in our minds. The only beef was that it rained practically every day of the trip. We had to remind ourselves that it was July before we put on our rain gear every morning. Well, actually it was good to see some rain, anywhere! Hope we get some in here soon.

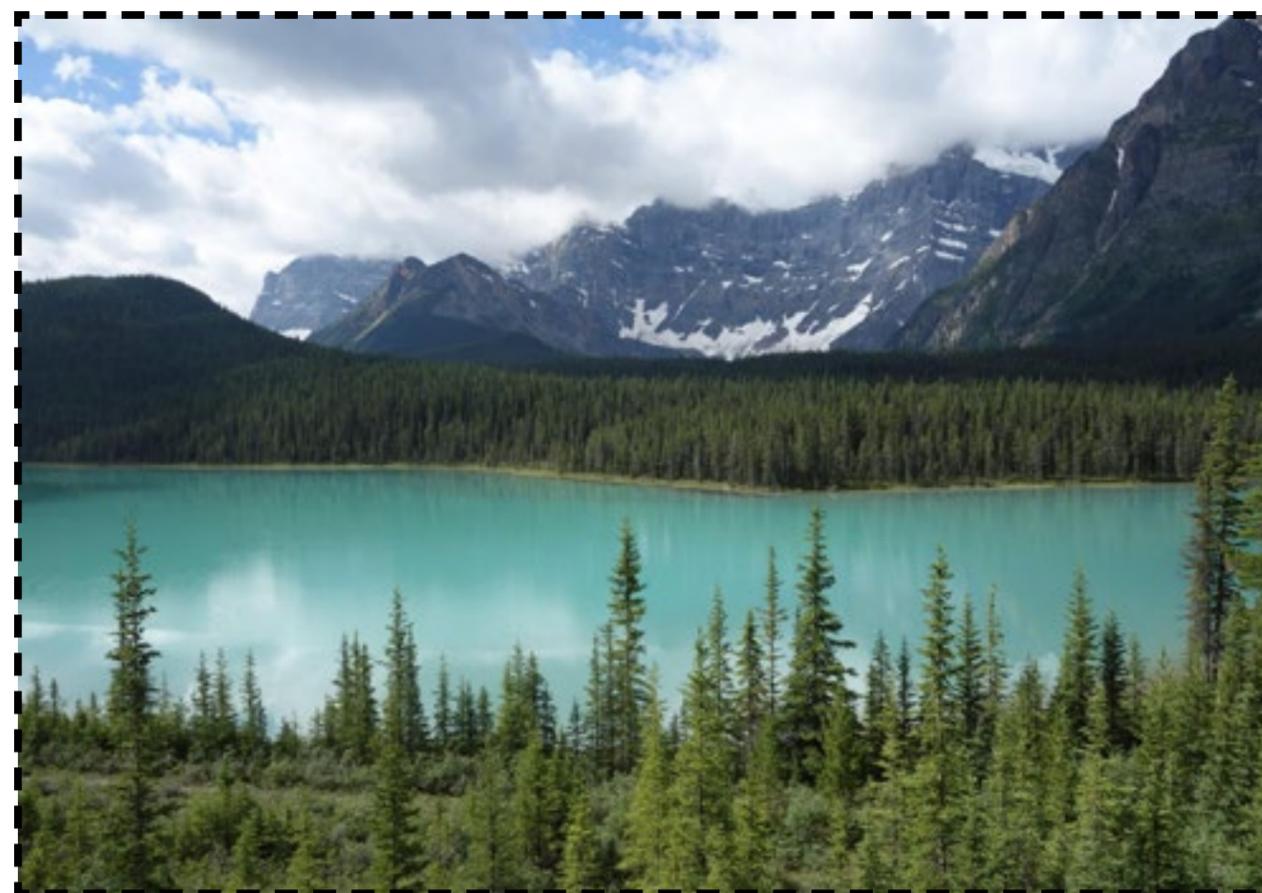
The Amtrak Century seemed to go without a hitch thanks to all the volunteers from OCW and even those who just happened to be visiting us in mid-September. Special thanks go to our 2016 Event Coordinator, Raffaele Spennato, for all his time and effort, and to Mike Lee and Lee Stebbins, who brought all their expertise and contacts to make the event a success once again. To all, I thank you on behalf of all the riders who enjoyed a great ride.

The days may be shorter but we still have to be vigilant about our exposure to the Sun. Keep putting on the sunscreen, and use those arm warmers. Be predictable, ride safe, and have a wonderful Autumn!

Miguel



"Okay, you stick to the old method Hank. But believe me, this is the future."





AMTRAK CENTURY 2016

"Great ride, great weather, and great support! Thanks to all the volunteers that make the ride enjoyable. The ride this year was literally no sweat! At the Torry pines rest stop, I discovered a great flavor combination, watermelon Popsicle and Oreo cookie- definitely better than either eaten separately. The ride highlight was the Bristol Farms food at the finish!"

"Thank you to the volunteers and organizers to make this ride possible"

"This was my first Century. It was a fun-filled day, made possible only with an amazing volunteer/support staff. Everyone had a smile and an encouraging comment. The food was great, and the popsicle perfect!! I was worried about the bike being scratched or dented on the ride home, but was astounded at how well the bike was covered and handled"

"Couldn't ask for anything more and the train ride back is the best!!"





"I've done several centuries in the past 27 years in the States of WA and AZ. This was one of the best overall experiences. Registration was simple"

"Overall, the event was terrific and well organized. This was my first time participating. I appreciate all the countless volunteers who worked hard to make it a successful and smooth event"

"I would like to thank the OCW for another superior event. This is my 6th time in a row. I'm not sure how you arranged for perfect weather, but it was appreciated. Morning check-in was painless. As usual all the rest stops were well stocked and the volunteers were friendly and helpful. There was always someone ready to fill my water bottles"





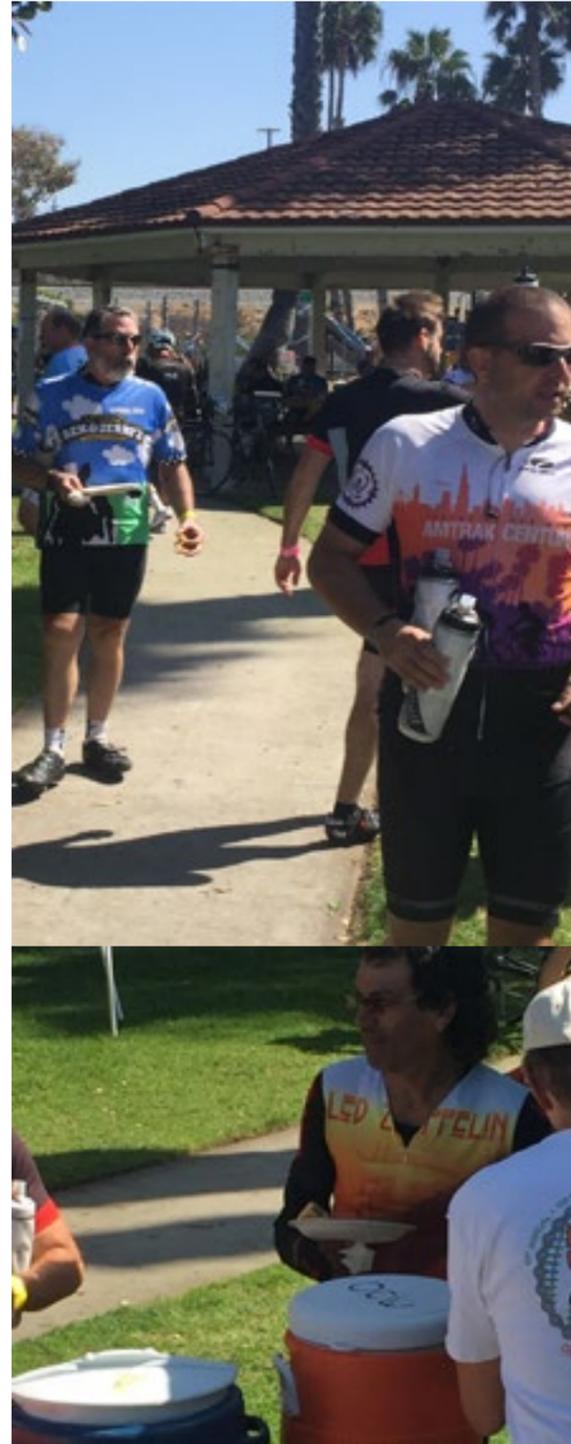
Thank you
Bristol Farms
For your incredible support!





AMTRAK PICTURES OCEANSIDE 2016

Courtesy of Michael Bush



Goat Hill

By Alan Vester, Mountain Bike Dude

Mountain Biking Geared Toward the 50+ Rider

Race to Learn

I race during the summer months at Irvine Lake in the Over the Hump Mountain Bike Race Series. It's comprised of 12 mountain bike races on Tuesday evenings from 6:00 to 8:00 pm. I'm your classic cat 3 (beginner class) racer. The category I race in, "60+ open," is more of a cat 1 & 2 level, which is faster than my ability. I do this on purpose, because I would rather lose to the best, than beat up on a bunch of beginner mountain bikers.

I use racing to see how far I can push my mental and physical limits. I have to think about when to pass another rider, when to back off and when to hold my position. Racing is a great motivator to get in better shape. I may never podium, but I want to know I gave my best effort and I finished the race exhausted. I find myself training and riding harder during race season, because my motivation is not to finish in last place.

I'm finding that my bike handling skills and conditioning are improving because I race during the summer. We human types are motivation driven. We go to work every day for pay. We lose weight to look better. We earn more money to buy more stuff. We eat because we are hungry. It's just the way we are hard wired.

I did not race for many years because I thought it was useless, unless you were a professional being sponsored by a factory team. I see things differently now. Knowing I'll be racing on Tuesday evenings, gets me motivated to pay closer attention to my nutrition, make sure my weight stays in check and gives me more purpose to train during the week.

Racing is a very humbling experience. I have been passed during a race by guys weighing 350 lbs., kids who are still in Junior High School and mountain bike riders in their 70s. You may think you are a good rider, but until you put your skills on the line, you will never know. It's frustrating to lose, but better to know how good or marginal you really are. Some of the guys go out and pound their competition every week and take home their 1st place prize. I really don't see what the point of that is.

I would like to finish in the top 3 in at least one of the races next year. I only hope that does not make me lazy and fat.

See ya on the trails.



For more information on Goat Hill or to be added to the e-mail list just send me a note at: alanvester7@gmail.com

Who Knows What Evils Lurk in the Heart of Your Bike's Shifting?

By Bruce B.



When it comes to maintaining your bike, too often, out-of-sight means out-of-mind. I've seen this happen too many times before. Many people are super happy the first few months after they get their new bike and everything works perfectly, as it should. Fast forward a few accidental drops (I never do this) and a few rides in the rain..

A lot of people put in hundreds of miles on their bikes and come back from their rides exhausted. Totally understandable. It's almost instinctive to just throw your bike in the corner before you plop down on the couch with a beer. But as time goes by, the smoothly operating machine that you loved can become a cantankerous beast. It's easy to postpone a tune-up or a quick drivetrain cleaning, but each time you ignore your bike you're taking a step down the dark, dark path of bicycle neglect.

So how may you avoid the dark side you ask? This time we will focus on your bike's derailleur cables. Just this past weekend at our mechanic station for the Amtrak Century, we had eight different people stop by with shifter cable failures. Even on our very own Elfin Forest remote ride, we had two riders with complete cable failure.

The newer 11-speed systems, particularly those from Shimano (Dura-Ace, Ultegra and 105) rely on a systems design approach to achieve their phenomenal performance. This approach includes re-designed cable housing and polymer-coated cable wires, coupled with radically higher cable tension.

The result is a shifting system that works really, really well until it doesn't. And when it doesn't, it can be with catastrophic and expensive results. Derailleur cables are made up of stranded wire and work with the shift lever to move your derailleur in the precise increments necessary to smoothly shift your bike from one gear to the next. They operate by bending back and forth the inside of your levers (out-of-sight, remember) and they begin to fail by breaking one strand at a time. As you continue to shift, more and more of these wires fray and snap resulting in either cable failure or in the worst case, lever failure. In either case your bike is out of commission. The cost of a cable is about 12 bucks, (installation is included as part of an ARB Classics level or above tune-up). If an individual lever is destroyed by a broken cable, the cost of the replacement lever can be in excess of \$200.

Especially if you haven't looked at this often-overlooked critical component in more than a year, it's really a good time to include cable replacement as part of your bike's routine maintenance. As a general rule of thumb, it is a good idea to replace your cables annually. And if you happen to be riding enough miles, it would be a good idea to have your cables changed when your chain needs to be replaced. And if you are planning on going on the Ride 2 Recovery Orange County Honor Ride, it would be a very wise choice to have your cables replaced before the ride. Your bike will continue to please you with like-new performance and your wallet will thank you.



Saturday October 22, 2016



Sunday December 11, 2016



The Phantom

By Peter Gerrard

On the way back to my car after finding the Tomassi family I was pretty amped, as I had made some new friends and had a damn good story. It was a quiet walk back down the trail, and the only person I ran into was an old guy walking his dog. We nodded hellos. I probably drove down Pritchard's a little too fast but I was ready to write.

My enthusiasm was quickly squelched back at work the next day. "You're late. And Mr. Lester wants to see you in his office. Now," was the greeting when I tried to breeze by the reception desk.

Lester was at his desk when I walked in, and he had company. I didn't recognize the company at first. But when Lester motioned towards him and said, "This is Mr. Pinth-Garnell from the NSA. You met yesterday," I realized it was the old guy I'd seen yesterday on the path.

Turns out I had been delTongoed. The Tomassi clan was under witness protection and the story would likely endanger the family. I had to give the NSA guys my phone and computer, so all pics "disappeared." They let me keep the hat, though.

And I got a new assignment. "Halloween's coming," Lester said with a smile. "Find a story about cycling and paranormal happening." I think he really hates me.

A week of talking to bike club officers and trolling coffee shops finally netted me a few contacts. The stories are out there, and there are some dandies. This was the best one, though.

I met a woman I'll call "Lenore" in a dark and quiet corner of SOCO. She'd suggested it as there's a Portola Coffee Lab and lots of anonymity in a hipster environment. I wore the delTongo cap so she could find me in case my lack of skinny jeans wasn't enough.

Lenore was pretty agitated. We exchanged vague pleasantries and I expected it would take some time to get her comfortable. But she suddenly stood, as if she had too much emotion welling inside her up to sit still, and started speaking.

I'd gone up to Pelican Hill to visit the ghost bike marking where a rider was killed by a hit-and-run driver, right at the curve where you can see from Dana Point to Palos Verdes, and Catalina if it's a really clear day. It was one of those days.

"Her name was Emilie Parkwood... I knew her, not well, though. She would ride with my bike club once in a while. We were bike friends, but that was it. She had a wonderful laugh. I liked her smile".

I rode from home, it didn't seem right to drive up there. I needed to feel the gravity of the situation, and being on the bike gives me time for my thoughts, my awareness always seems stronger.

I followed the route I imagined she'd taken: up Newport Coast from where she lived, a right on Pelican Hill, and then another climb until the road bends left and you drop toward the ridge above PCH. A motorcycle cop half-hiding in a side street pointed a radar gun at me. I was flying. My eyes were streaming tears, from the wind, mostly, and then I was past the gated compound on my right and I could see the ocean. I saw the ghost bike, a shimmering white thing leaning on a light pole at the end of a small hedge.

I couldn't look at it for long, but I couldn't leave yet. It was between the hedge and the edge of the drop, with enough room behind it to sit and not see the memorial. Or be seen. I rolled my bike over and laid it down.

I smoothed the dirt with my shoe and sat, cross-legged.

I was lost in my thoughts. A light breeze murmured in the surrounding brush, the flower bouquets trembling and whispering. I imagined I could hear surf and smell the saltwater.

The quiet ended with a car pulling up, rudely and noisily. Doors slammed; From behind me I heard footsteps. I figured it was her friends, I couldn't see a random car stopping, even out of curiosity. People who live on Newport Coast don't have time for curiosity unless money is involved.

Then there was laughter, harsh and grating. I was stunned, and I stood to look. There were two men standing in front of the bike, finding some perverse humor in the scene. The shorter of them of them kicked over a vase with roses, breaking the glass and scattering the flowers. I must have gasped, because they turned and noticed me. The taller one smiled, a cruel leer, really. He raised his arm. Not to hit me, but to curl his hand up and gesture, one finger extended ahead, thumb up. He raised it higher, to his eye, and squinted. He was letting me know he was aiming at me. His friend chuckled. "One rider down. Want to be next?"

They knew I couldn't do anything. And that was enough, I guess. They went back to the car. As it pulled away I saw a deep and long scratch on the right front fender.

It got quiet again. I was angry at them, at myself, for Ellie, and at everything that in my mind conspired to allowed things like this to happen.

I heard a motorcycle approaching. It was the cop I'd seen earlier. I didn't rush to him. He stopped and looked at me for a few moments, turned off the bike, eased himself off the saddle and came over to me.

"Are you alright?"

His tone was soft, and more caring than the just-the-facts ma'am officious attitude I was expecting. Aside from his voice, he was everything you expect in a motor cop. Husky, tall riding boots. Leathers, a blue stripe on the pants. A glossy helmet, and soulless mirrored aviator glasses. He had a Newport Beach Police shield on one shirt pocket, and "Sgt. Dunsel" engraved on a name badge pinned to the other.

I found myself rattling off what had happened, more factually than emotionally, but even I could hear the catch in my voice. When I finished, he said "wait here."



He walked back to the motorcycle, started it, and took off.

I waited. I had no reason not to. After a while I noticed sirens, I figured they were from the fire station at the top of Newport Coast. There were more sirens, I peered over the embankment and saw an engine and a paramedic unit racing toward Newport Coast from Corona del Mar. It got quiet again.

About a half-hour passed, I think. I heard the purr of a motorcycle coming back up Pelican Hill. It was Sgt Dunsel. He pulled over to the curb, idling, but didn't shut down the bike. I walked over to him, close enough to touch him. But I didn't. The engine rumbled softly.

He reached to me and touched my arm. "It's over," he said. "Don't worry about a thing." I nodded. He put the bike in gear and rode back up Pelican Hill. I watched him until he disappeared around the bend.

Lenore looked drained. I offered her some water. She thanked me, and drank some. Then she told me the rest.

"Here's the odd part," Lenore said. "I saw a story in the paper the next day about two guys dying in a car crash on Newport Coast. They went over the edge and into the ravine between the two places that Pelican Hill Road loops into Newport Coast Road. The car flipped and exploded. The EMTs couldn't do a thing except watch them burn.

"According to the report, the only witness was a guy they passed. He said they came up behind him going really fast. As they went by, he said he could

see the driver's face, and he looked terrified, like he was being chased by a demon. The witness said he thought they were being chased by a motorcycle. The police, as they say, were investigating.

I couldn't let it rest, though. I know an officer who works in Newport, and I went to talk to him. At first I didn't tell him everything, just that I'd seen the two guys and what they'd said. He took lots of notes. Then he went and got the incident report, but he wouldn't let me read it. But he told me that the investigation was pretty well over.

It seems there are traffic and security cameras at the intersection and at the resort across from the end of Pelican Hill. There's footage of the car, coming up from PCH at a normal clip, and then suddenly burning rubber and running the light, going around the witness' vehicle, still accelerating as it began to fishtail, spin, and hit the curb. It disappears as it flips and drops out of view, and then there's the lick of flames and some smoke.

He closed the folder. I asked him about the motorcycle the witness thought was chasing the car. He said that there was no motorcycle on any of the footage and that the guy imagined it.

So I told him about Sgt. Dunsel, mostly with the idea that he'd pass along my thanks for his kindness. My friend got a funny look on his face, and said, "Who?"

I described the officer, and his bike, and how I saw him, everything I could remember. He was really listening. But he didn't write anything down.

When I finished he picked up his desk phone and made a call, but he made sure I couldn't listen to what he was saying. When he hung up he asked me if I'd mind talking with one of his investigators in a few minutes. I said I didn't mind.

We ended up in a basement-level interrogation room. My friend led me in. There was a rectangular table with chairs on either side, like you see in the old movies. There was a guy sitting on one of them, no folders, no paper, no pen. Just a small manila envelope, about the size a dentist uses to give you back a tooth or broken crown. He motioned me to sit. 'Please call me Jim,' he said, and then looked at my friend and said, "You can leave now."

There was a camera on a tripod pointing at me from behind me, and its record light was on. He got up and

stopped it."

"Tell me your story," he said. I repeated what I'd reported upstairs to my friend. It was all I had.

"We think we know so much," he muttered to himself after I'd finished. The he looked straight at me. He said there was no Sgt. Dunsel on the Newport Beach Police Department. Now, or ever. He paused. But I knew had more to tell me.

"Here's the rub, then," he said. "We did have a Sgt. Rogers. He was a motor cop. His daughter was killed crossing the street near their house, hit and run. No one saw anything. We never arrested a suspect."

"Rogers was devastated. When our detectives put it in the cold case file he tried investigating on his own. Naturally, we stopped him. We let him keep working, but made him take a desk job."

"He wanted his old job back. Said he felt worthless working in the office. He started calling himself "Sgt. Dunsel." Someone finally figured out it was an obscure Star Trek reference, about a person who had a title but served no useful purpose anymore. I never figured him for a Trekkie. Who knew?"

"Rogers took early retirement as soon as we could offer it to him, and I think a few rules may have bent to help it along. His wife had left him by this point. We hoped he'd leave and start a new life. But he stayed in the area — West Costa Mesa, as I recall. A few of his old motor buddies kept in touch for a while, but he wanted no part of it. I heard he kept looking into his daughter's death."

"Our chaplain knew a pastor at the church he used to attend, and got a call two years ago that Rogers was in a bad way and in a hospice. On a whim he visited Rogers. Surprisingly, they actually had a good conversation. "I know I'm going to die," he told the chaplain, "But I know in my heart I'll never be at peace until I've finished my job." We saw his obit in the Daily Pilot two days later."

I looked at Jim, and said, "So that's it?" He folded his hands together and didn't say anything. I got up to leave, and as I turned away he said, "There's something else."

I sat back down. Jim unfolded his hands and stared at me intently. "You're not the first person to report running into a Sgt. Dunsel. Without exception it always is

connected to a hit-and-run. I can't explain it, and we'll never acknowledge it officially."

"I did some checking after I was told about your story, the part about meeting Sgt. Dunsel, before you came down here. Our logs are really good, and every patrol car and bike has continual GPS communications for confirmation. It just takes a second to query the database. We didn't have any motor officers assigned to Pelican Hill Road that day. The GPS tracking confirms that not one unit even drove through there within four hours of when you had your run-in."

"I know our guys went through the crash scene with a fine-toothed comb, and I'm satisfied that we retrieved every bit of evidence related to that car losing control and crashing. But I went there the next day to walk it, and try to look at it from a different perspective. I had some weird feeling. I started at the bottom, where all the cameras are. I hiked the half-mile to where the car flipped. I didn't find anything."

When I got back to my car and started it I saw a warning light that the fuel door was open. I don't know how it got open, it's supposed to latch when you lock the doors. I'd had to unlock the car a moment earlier. It's not just a warning light, there's a voice you can't turn off that keeps nagging at you to close it. So I got out and went to shut the fuel door. It wouldn't close. I looked inside and saw there was something blocking the hinge.

Jim pushed the small envelope over to me, and said, "I think you should have this."

Lenore stopped. She reached down to her purse, and fished out a small envelope. She undid the metal clasps, opened it, and shook the contents onto the table.

It was small white piece of plastic. It landed on a side with a pin clasp you might use to attach it to a uniform showing. She flipped it over, to the side that read "Sgt. Dunsel."



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Doris' Hike to San Gorgonio

This 22-mile hike to Mt. San Gorgonio (11,499') on Saturday, September 24, 2016, was a bit out of the norm for me. Usually Larry and I hike together, but this time, Larry was unable to join me because of a foot injury that was not quite healed. We decided that it was not a good idea for him to attempt that many miles so soon. Our plan was for Larry to meet me at about 3:30 pm at the south end of Vivian Creek Trail where it crosses the currently dry Mill Creek. Larry reported that at about 10:00 am, to console himself while I was out hiking, he rode his mountain bike up the Loch Leven trail to Angelus Oaks and back. That was only about a 3-hour ride. For the rest of the day, we were completely out of cell-phone contact with each other. That made Larry uncomfortable, but he kept telling himself: "Doris knows these trails and I don't need to waste time with needless worry."

I planned to start the hike before sunrise at the Momyer Trail in Forest Falls. By 5:00 am, I was at the Momyer trailhead. The route took me north, along the Momyer Trail for about 3 miles to the turn-off to the Alger Creek Trail. Once on the Alger Creek Trail, a hike of about 3.5 miles brought me to the Falls Creek Trail where it heads north toward the Dollar Lake Saddle. Forest access on the other side of Dollar Lake Saddle was closed because of all the damage caused by the Lake Fire several months earlier. On the Momyer/Alger Creek/Falls Creek Trail, there was only one other person on the trail, a bow hunter dressed in cammies. I spotted a healthy-looking bobcat below Jepson Peak, but he ran away too fast for a photo. From the saddle, I traveled southeast on the San Bernardino Summit Ridge Trail which took me past Charlton Peak, Little Charlton Peak, the West and East Summits of Dobbs Peak, and Jepson Peak on the way to Vivian Creek Trail. I had been on this trail a couple years before going the other direction

when I completed the "Nine Peaks Challenge". Things didn't seem much different. I heard lots of talking and yelling from Vivian Creek Trail and could see a line of hikers in the distance, headed to the summit of San Gorgonio. I soon found myself in that line, headed to the crowded summit. Thus far during the hike, the sky had been blue and the temperature had been very comfortable for hiking.



As I passed through the tree line and neared the summit of San Gorgonio above the 11,000-foot level, things began to change. The wind really picked up and the temperatures began to drop. In addition, the noise from the crowd of hikers was invading the usual solitude found at the summit. I only spent about 10 minutes at the summit, just long enough to get a couple pictures of the Golden Mantle Ground Squirrels (looks a lot like a big chipmunk) that were looking for free handouts from everyone. After signing the peak register, I headed down along the 9-mile Vivian Creek Trail. Surprisingly, there was still a large gaggle of hikers on



their way up to the summit of San Gorgonio. I hope they all returned safely. So many of the hikers looked very ill-prepared for the conditions they were about to find at the summit. Within a few hours I was almost back down to Mill Creek. Larry had come up the easy part of Vivian Creek Trail from Mill Creek and was waiting for me at the San Gorgonio Wilderness boundary sign, just sitting there reading his newspaper. What a cool surprise! I was very happy to see him. We walked the rest of the way back together to the parking lot and drove to El Mexicano in Forest Falls for dinner. According to my GPS, I logged 22 miles with 6,570' of gain.

One thing I will say about this hike: I would really think hard about going to San G. on a weekend day again.





ZEN AND THE ART OF RANDONNEURING

RIDING PCH RANDOS' JOSHUA TREE TO VEGAS 300K
A STORY IN THREE VOICES:
STACY KLINE WITH GREG KLINE AND WILLIE HUNT

I really love riding in the desert. Some cyclists don't like it for a variety of valid reasons which, for the most part, are related to the extremes associated with riding in the desert. My husband Greg and I, however, are passionate about the desert, and many of our adventures, cycling or otherwise, tend to lead us to the open expanses of the desert. So when we heard that dear friend Willie Hunt had created yet another gorgeous route with the potential of being an epic adventure...

The route itself has huge expansive views across the Mojave desert including mountains, sand dunes, Joshua trees, railroad lines, the Ivanpah solar power plant, even the casino lights of Primm, Jean and Vegas. Riders can see for 50+ miles at several vista points. Traffic is generally quite light and often 10 or 15 minutes go by without a car passing. Climbing is reasonable at 8500 feet, but concentrated mostly in 2 massive climbs, and 2 smaller climbs. Wind is normally blowing toward Vegas, so it's possible to have a tailwind the whole way there! Pavement quality is good for the most part, but there are a number of miles that are rough with many potholes. 23mm tires will work, but 25 or 28mm would be wiser. Since cell connectivity is limited and spotty, the SAG will sweep the route to make sure no one is left out there.

...we signed up immediately. The fact that it was also one of Willie's "full service shuttled brevets" and that his renowned SAG support would cover

the entire route simply sweetened the deal for us. Riding from Joshua Tree through the Mojave National Preserve and finishing in Las Vegas would take us through some of the most iconic desert scenery the American West has to offer, with wide open expanses and plenty of time for introspection.

"Maybe it meant something. Maybe not, in the long run, but no explanation, no mix of words or music or memories can touch that sense of knowing that you were there and alive in that corner of time and the world."

~ Hunter S. Thompson, Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas

With PBP looming on the horizon, 14 intrepid souls joined us on the inaugural ride in March of 2015. Several of us spent the night in Joshua Tree, and the rest carpooled from Willie's house in the wee hours before the ride. Most of us were from the PCH Randos tribe such as Linda Bott and Foster Nagaoka who were riding towards their K-Hound awards; but we were also joined by other randos including our friend and fellow San Francisco Randonneur, John Guzik. It never ceases to amaze me how easy it is to spend hour after hour cycling with other randonneurs and this ride was no exception with Shai "Frisky Camel" Shprung, RBA Greg Jones, Eric Maddison, Doug Church, and others.

My husband Greg Kline writes about our cycling adventures in the blog gregandstacyride.com with

this ride being no exception, "We left the town of Joshua Tree at 06:00 and rode quickly toward the rising sun and the town of Twentynine Palms, helped by a slight tailwind and a gentle descent." Although it was still only March, it wasn't too cool and it was a simply lovely ride all morning as a large group of us rode together for some time. Greg continues, "From Twentynine Palms we climbed Amboy Road over Sheephole Summit and down towards the 'town' of Amboy on old Route 66" and this is where it started to get tougher for me. It warmed up considerably and Greg recalled that one of our number "started feeling the effects of the rising temperatures and decided to abandon the ride and join the support crew. At this time of year I don't think there's any way to train for this kind of riding in Northern California." The heat stayed with us for the entire ride. In the desert, you often give up one extreme for another. If it's not windy, the heat may become unbearable, if it's not hot, it can get quite cold, especially after the sun sets, and the wind can be extraordinarily strong as well. In this first year there was very little wind, so we had quite a warm ride making the two long climbs especially challenging.

Riding in the open desert like this, it's never the same route twice, and there are always unique experiences that will always stay with you. Greg Kline notes,

From Kelso Depot the route diverged from the 508 course and headed northeast through the stunning and remote Mojave National Preserve. I've noticed that every long ride seems to have a surreal experience or two. On this ride we passed a group of Japanese motorcycle riders on Harley Davidsons who were stopped to reconnoiter. Dressed in new leather motorcycle outfits, they were obviously on tour seeing the Western part of the U.S. The driver of their support truck stopped us and explained that they were looking for Route 66. Since we had just come from there, it was easy to point them in the right direction. They gave us a cheer and a round of applause as we pedaled North into the Mojave. This was the best part of the ride - quiet, remote and scenic. As we climbed the Joshua Trees started to reappear. Nearing Nevada,

we could see a huge dust cloud created by an ORV race.

In 2016 the Joshua Tree to Las Vegas 300k was run in February, nearly a month earlier than in 2015. It was much cooler, due in part to the windier conditions. It started out very comfortable, with no one needing much warm clothing. There were only seven riders, and all were strong riders except for me, with everyone finishing by 8PM. I rode without Greg this year because he was on a single-handed 2600-mile sail from Hawaii to California, so after the first few hours, I never saw another rider. Willie, as usual, was an amazing companion with his SAG, and I never felt truly alone on the entire ride. I saw him so frequently, at least once every two or three hours, that my water bottle was never empty on the entire ride. After the first SAG visit, he assured me that it was always a tailwind on the way into Amboy. I remember thinking to myself "except when it's not" and this year it wasn't; so it was a slow but pleasant haul with no drafting buddy. At the town of Amboy, Willie filled us full of food and drink, I bid adieu to Doug Church and his friend who had passed me after starting half an hour later and Willie and I noted that it was now indeed a tailwind, just in time for the big climb through the Mojave National Preserve.

Riding an entire 300K alone is a singular experience. I never felt isolated or lonely; I simply marveled at the subtle beauty of the desert. I often feel as if I am at sea when I'm in the desert, self-sufficient and free. The vast expanses help me to unclutter my mind. Greg and I have found the motorists to be very courteous while riding in the desert. Time and again, they changed lanes to pass me. Riding in the right tire track, especially since there was no shoulder for most of the ride, I never felt unwelcome on the road. Only one semi truck honked and when I waved that it wasn't safe to pass with oncoming traffic, I heard him use his engine brake. We waved and smiled at each other when he passed a moment later. The wildflowers were amazing this year. The El Niño rains created a spectacular "Super Bloom" and I took my time, riding steadily to avoid overheating or cramping, taking photos of the bright blue verbena, desert trumpet, primrose, and yellow brittlebush along the way, marveling at such a rare treat.

As the sun began to set, I was considerably behind the other riders, several of whom had already arrived at the hotel in Vegas. I knew that I would need almost the entire 20 hours for this 300k because I did not want to overheat, or injure myself since I was alone. I asked Willie if he would make sure that I made it to the I15 freeway so that my cell phone would work again, and I only had to call if I had a problem. Actually, I had to make Willie go to the hotel after I was safely on the 15, I didn't want him to miss out visiting with the other randos, and I was really pleased that I finally had Vegas in my sights. Greg describes the home stretch as follows.

blew the dust from the ORV race away from us. At Jean Nevada the route took the front-age road, South Las Vegas Blvd, which was nice fast downhill all the way to the finish at the south end of town.

When I reached Primm, I had a wonderful sit-down dinner at the Mexican restaurant inside Buffalo Bill's casino. It was honestly the happiest place I have ever seen. The valets parked my bike, excited to hear about our big ride, and the entire casino was filled with Mexican music, people dancing, and although everyone was wearing their best outfits, no one batted an eye as I walked in with my high viz yellow and helmet. After a relaxing meal, it was a pleasant, mostly downhill, 20-mile trip into Vegas where I arrived with 45 minutes to spare. A big thanks to the amazing Willie Hunt for putting on such a wonderful event and Greg and I cannot recommend it highly enough. Point-to-point rides are especially enjoyable because you never know what's around the next corner.

From near the state line, the course took the most direct course of riding on the I-15 itself, which wasn't too bad as the shoulder was wide and in good condition. The only downsides to riding on the shoulder were the chunks of blown-out retread tires and the curiously large amount of gravel. Fortunately we had a slight headwind from the East that.



The Hungry Cyclist



Apple-Cheddar-Rosemary Beignets

Ingredients

SERVINGS: MAKES ABOUT 24

- 8 ounces aged cheddar, divided
- 1 cup whole milk, warmed
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 ¼-ounce envelope active dry yeast (about 2¼ teaspoons)
- 1 large egg
- 1 large egg yolk
- 2 tablespoons honey, plus more for drizzling
- 1½ teaspoons finely chopped rosemary, plus small sprigs for frying
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 3½ cups all-purpose flour, plus more for surface
- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, room temperature, cut into pieces
- Vegetable oil (for frying and bowl; about 6 cups)
- 1 cup coarsely chopped peeled firm baking apple
- Flaky sea salt

Special Equipment

A deep-fry thermometer

Preparation

Coarsely grate half of cheddar, then cut remaining cheddar into small pieces; set aside.

Combine milk, sugar, and yeast in the bowl of a stand mixer and let sit until it foams. Whisk in egg, egg yolk, and 2 Tbsp. honey. Add chopped rosemary, baking powder, kosher salt, and 3½ cups flour and mix on low speed with dough hook until incorporated and dough forms a ball around hook.

Increase mixer speed to medium and add butter a piece at a time, beating until completely incorporated before adding more. Mix until dough is smooth and starting to pull away from sides of bowl, 6-8 minutes. With motor running, gradually add grated cheese and mix until incorporated. Transfer to a large oiled bowl, cover, and let sit in a warm, draft-free spot until doubled in size, 1-2 hours.

Turn out dough onto a lightly floured surface and roll out to a 14" square. Scatter apples and chopped cheese evenly over dough and roll up into a log; gather log into a ball. Place back in bowl and let sit in a warm, draft-free spot until nearly doubled in size, 45-60 minutes.

Pour oil into a large heavy pot to come 2" up sides; fit pot with thermometer and heat oil over medium-high until thermometer registers 325°. Working in batches and using 2 spoons, carefully drop ovoid-shaped scoops of dough (about 3" long and 1" thick) into oil and cook, turning once, until deep golden brown all over, about 4 minutes. Transfer to a wire rack.

Fry rosemary sprigs, turning occasionally, until crisp, about 2 minutes; crumble over beignets. Drizzle generously with honey and sprinkle with sea salt.



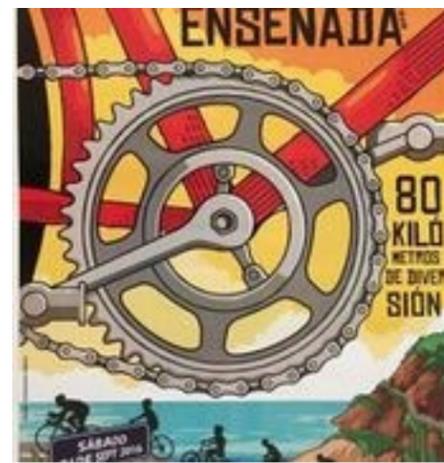


Mexico Anyone?

37th Rosarito to Ensenada **FUN** Ride



- It's now a regular event for a number of OCW members to ride to Ensenada. The Fun Ride being only 50 miles we like to start in Orange County to add on the 120 miles down to a hotel in Puerto Nuevo.
- We also donate our bikes to charity at the end. It makes it more worthwhile. We used to start early and ride the whole way to Puerto Nuevo but of late we have found it more fun to stay overnight in San Diego. We then take the ferry to Coronado, ride Silver Strand and weave through Imperial Beach to the Mexican Border. The worst part is riding through Tijuana and up the hill out of town. It's invariably hot, the roads are rubbish and there is no bike lane. Once out of town though, there is a pleasant enough ride along to coast to the hotel.
- On the day of the Fun Ride the roads are closed which makes it even more pleasant to ride along the coast road. But when the road turns inland it starts to get hilly. The El Tigre climb is much like Newport Coast in length and grade but it proves a bit of a challenge for the donor bikes and beach cruisers. Even before that, Rob's bottom bracket decided it wanted to regularly exit the frame. The upside was that we met Cyrielle and Thomas, from France. They are taking 18 months to ride from San Francisco into South America. Their German HASE bike was a wonder to behold, recumbent on the front and a regular bike on the back. I think they could use some lessons in packing though. I just hope their back axle makes it.
- The end of the Fun Ride is one big party and you even get a medal for riding 50 miles. Cyrielle and Thomas somehow made it over El Tigre with all their stuff. I suspect their progress was quite slow. Their bike had a Rohloff hub gear in addition to the derailleur, so bottom gear must be a crawler.
- If anyone has any sort of bike that they would like to donate for future rides we would be very grateful. The next ride will be in May.



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FOR MORE INFORMATION GO TO: WWW.OCWHEELMEN.ORG/PAGE/SHOW/419732-RIDE-LIKE-A-PRO-RIDES

My First Century Ride

This was my first Century Ride and first 'organized' ride for that matter. The most I had ridden prior to this was 54 miles along the Green River to Huntington Beach trail and that was just the week prior! Needless to say, I felt both anxious and worried that I wouldn't be able to hold up and make it to each of the stops on time. Luckily, I had 3 fellow riders to lean on (James, Paul, and Tom); 2 of whom (James and Paul) had done the Amtrak Century in prior years past. Even though we had some experience on our team, I still wasn't quite sure what I needed to bring so I stopped by REI and overstocked on food and energy e.g., Blox, Nuun, and various energy bars.

During the ride I couldn't help but be impressed with the event organization and the food, drinks, snacks, and supportive volunteers at each of the stops! I realized then that OC Wheelmen was going to provide everything I would need to make it through! All that was required on my part was to pedal, stay on course, and just focus on making it to each of the stops. What a relief! The course was fabulous too: San Onofre to Camp Pendleton down through Carlsbad - these are all places we zip by on the 5 freeway with little regard so to see these sites (not to mention the beautiful coastline) at slower speeds really allowed me to soak in the scenery and get a mental break from having to be in the saddle.

James and Paul had been warning Tom and I about the dreaded climb to Torrey Pines so I made certain to ride toward the 3rd rest stop at a calm and relaxed pace. The lunch break was much needed and a welcome recharge! Again, great and plentiful food and sandwiches! I left that stop feeling the best I had been all day. My favorite part of the ride was making it up to the top of Torrey and then riding into the finish. I've run half marathons before but never felt a sense of true joy and accomplishment. But with the Century Ride on the other hand, I really felt I achieved something and was so excited for all the riders and my friends for having crossed the line.

We're already talking about next year's ride and who we can invite to join us - haha! I'd like to train a little more next time but I guess feeling's mutual for most. All in all, fantastic ride, experience, and accomplishment.

THANK YOU OC WHEELMEN for my first and your 42th Amtrak Century! Bravo!

Regards,
-Aaron Lee

PS Attached is a photo of us four at rest stop #2 (Mile 49) :) Look how happy we are! Left to Right: Tom, Paul, James, and myself





It's Not About the Bike

By John Renowden, Vice President

Since I retired I have developed a philosophy, "Say Yes to Everything." Sometimes though, this gets you into trouble. Sitting with a bunch of OCW riders, a while back, Greg Kline says to me, "What are you doing tonight?" Next thing I know I have volunteered to man a kayak in support of a channel swimmer. This involved boarding a boat to ship everyone out to Catalina and then taking it in shifts to paddle next to the swimmer who set off at midnight from the island beach. While paddling through the dark waters I found myself wondering if my job was to whack the sharks on the nose with the paddle to keep them away. It's very eerie in the dark out there. Still, I guess it's worse for the swimmer, who swam like an automaton to make it to Palos Verdes in 14 hours.

But I digress. This is a story about hiking. It's like cycling but there's no bike. This means you have to carry a load of stuff, which would be better transported on the bike. I've decided I don't like hiking but in May my philosophy had me agreeing to hike the Grand Canyon with Miguel, Randy and Stuart. On the way out of the canyon we were met by a very helpful sign which basically said "Don't hike from the rim to the river and back in one day or you will die" As we had almost completed the 25 miles and 6,700 ft of descent/assent of this epic event we took it as a good sign that we weren't dead yet. With that we repaired to the bar to celebrate not dying but we were clearly a bit of a sight as we could see the bar staff debating who among them would be brave enough to serve this sweaty disheveled band.

The next thing that happened is that Anne Loughran was awarded 10 places in the Mt Whitney lottery. So I now find myself buying a ton of stuff to lug up to Trail Camp before the final assault on the sum

mit. I suppose if you are going to hike you may as well claim the highest peak in the Contiguous States. As Stuart Gaston said, if you've climbed Whitney you don't need to climb any of the lesser summits. So what did I learn from this?

1. You need a lot of stuff to camp, so your pack weighs 45 lbs
2. My old boots were too smooth so I kept slipping on the rough trail. You are advised not to take on a hike like this in new boots but that proved to be a mistake, I think?
3. On Whitney, the word "Trail", is a bit of a misnomer, as a lot of it involves scrambling over big rocks.
4. It's harder coming down than going up. Steep steps with a heavy pack are difficult to negotiate on the way down.
5. One of the Whitney rules is to keep all food and scented items in a Bear-proof container. Thankfully we didn't see any bears but the pesky marmots would steal anything.
6. I wonder if it's better to do the summit and back in a day with a light pack. But then we would have missed out on Stuart's jambalaya at trail camp. Come to think of it, that's another reason to hike it in a day.
7. Suffering is relative. When we started our hike from Whitney Portal we could see the Badwater Ultramarathon finishers coming in after running 135 miles through Death Valley. Their run had included a total ascent of 14,600 ft, the height of Whitney summit. For us, it was only 6,500 ft to the summit. But then we did have heavy packs and the altitude to contend with.
8. The stats say 30% of hikers don't make it to the summit but we all did. In my case, just, but then, I'm not a hiker; give me a bike any day.

My Bicycle Adventure Riding the Amtrak Century



My name is Diane Enriquez-O'Dell. I'm 51 years old, married and have a 26-year-old daughter. Both my husband and I road bike. I bought my first road bike just over 2 years ago. I started out mtn biking in 2009, then my husband invited me to join him at a road bike ride event in Napa Valley and I loved it.

Last Saturday's ride was amazing and we couldn't ask for better weather. It was perfect!! My ride started around 5:45 a.m. and at San Onofre Plant I got my first flat (my rear tire). Three riders (Jill, David & Donna?) stopped to give me a hand which I'm very grateful for their help. The rest of my ride seemed to be smooth until I reached Rosecrans and Lytton Street when I realized things didn't look familiar to me. I decided to pull over to look at my map and was even more confused. I soon realized that I missed a turn (W. Point Loma Blvd). Then I decided to look on my iPhone maps for the street Nimitz Blvd. and saw that it was 25 blocks ahead of me. Started pedaling again and my ride immediately went from lost to bad when I noticed that my rear tire once again had a flat. All I could think about was why didn't I get a spare tube at one of the sag stops. So I did the unthinkable and began to ride on a flat tire to get closer to N. Harbor Blvd. where I could at least catch a bus that would stop in front of where the finish line was. On Nimitz and Harbor, I never saw other riders which was very odd to me. I stopped at the corner of Harbor and Nimitz to wait for the city bus (which was only 10-15 min). Met an older gentleman who was waiting for the bus too. He was kind enough to help me load my bike on the bike rack in front of the bus which is scary to watch your \$5,000 bike hang on when the bus was moving and hoping it doesn't come loose. Of course, as soon I was on the bus, riders rode right by us. Unfortunately, the bus driver said he was only going to the airport but I could catch a transfer to where I needed to go at the airport. I took the second bus and because of major construction off of W. Broadway (his normal bus route) at Harbor he would be taking a slightly different route (W. Ash St to Kettner Blvd to W. Broadway) which was the stop across from the trolley station which was 4 blocks away from the finish line. Once I got off the train, I decided to take my shoes off and walk in my socks which was gross but that helped me get to the finish line faster and save me from buying new cleats.

Finally, I made it to the finish line. It was not too long after arriving that someone informed me that I should've called the sag help line which I forgot about!!

Well, I'm happy I got to meet this nice older gentleman who was on his own adventure. He flew into San Diego from the Big Island to sail a new boat back to Hawaii which he apparently does this kinda thing for a living.

I'm grateful for my health, family and friends and even the curve balls life sends my way.

It's not how life treats you, it's how you respond to situations in your life.

Thanks for letting me share!

ROUND EM UP, LOAD EM UP

AN EXERCISE IN PRECISION TRUCK LOADING



BY JOE BERNHARDT

I worked both Friday and Saturday as a volunteer loading trucks, working registration, delivering worker sandwiches, loading bikes into 7 semi trailers, and cleaning up at the finish.

My Microsoft Band watch recorded on Saturday that I had walked 25,000 steps for nearly 14 miles. I don't know how many times I climbed up and down the back of the semi trailers but it was a bunch. All of the volunteers were great and it would be great to get the same crew back next year. At times, we had so many riders showing up that we loaded two trucks simultaneously.

In spite of the hard work, I never heard a complaint from any volunteer. I have to admit that by Saturday night, I was physically beat. My conclusion is that working the Amtrak is really harder than riding it, but seeing the event come off so well makes it all worthwhile!





Trip #4 (July 2013)

By John E. Van Vlear

The *Easier* Climb

On Friday, July 19th, we climbed Rock Creek Road (Old Sherwin Grade) into the Eastern Sierras (on the way to Mammoth). Rock Creek Road is a 20-mile climb of 5,800 feet, to the highest paved road in the state at over 10,000 feet. It is ranked the 10th toughest in California. After driving from Orange County and eating lunch in Lone Pine, at 1 p.m. we started the ride outside Bishop (4,500 feet) – it was 103 degrees!



View from the bottom of Rock Creek Road, at the Pine Creek Road exit from Highway 395



The mighty Sierras, as the climb begins



Part way up, the enclave of "Paradise" California

After about an hour of climbing, dousing ourselves in cold creek water felt really good!



Hannes Richter,¹ Bob Castle, Daniel Castle

After a break to fill bottles at Tom's Place (7,000 feet), we attacked Upper Rock Creek Road:



The Rock Creek on the left, as the road keeps rolling up and up!



Bob Castle dancing on the pedals



A bridge over the creek near the summit

¹ The weekend before, Hannes finished 2nd in his age group in the June Lake Olympic distance triathlon



Rock Creek Lake



6 p.m. at the top - 10,222 feet!

The *Harder* Climb

After pizza and a good night sleep at altitude in Mammoth, we relaxed on Saturday by eating a big breakfast and playing golf (Hannes took a modest 4-mile run instead!). Up at 5:22 a.m. Sunday (nice unround number for the alarm clocks), we ate while driving and headed down to Big Pine (south of Bishop, before Independence). By 7:40 a.m. we were back on the bikes – this time climbing massive Highway 168/White Mountain Road. Ranked as 3rd toughest in California, the 20-mile, 6,204-foot climb tops out at 10,152 feet, the state’s second highest paved road!

Last year, JVV took the following picture from Glacier Lodge Road on the other (west) side of the Owens Valley:



You can see Highway 168 – the repaved asphalt road looks like an “S” on the other side of Big Pine as it bisects the Owens River. The official climb starts as the road veers left then up past the river. The scale of everything is deceptive in the huge Owens Valley. While it doesn’t look possible, the 168 winds all the way up the deep shadowed gorge in the middle of the picture, exiting into Deep Springs Valley toward the nearby Nevada border.

When we started in downtown Big Pine (4,000 feet), it was pleasantly in the 70s but getting hotter quickly. Given the remoteness of the route, there are absolutely no services (or water). We had to carry everything ourselves. Typically on road bikes, we don’t use hydration back packs but on this occasion it was necessary. JVV carried 100 ounces of sports drink in a Camelback reservoir, plus two further 25-ounce bottles on the bike (one with sports drink and the other with frozen water – it would melt). Almost all of the 150 ounces was used for the climb. JVV also carried several sports bars (“Bonk Breaker” – the real name) and three sports energy gels.

While the heat was rising, so were we (and yes, those are identical jerseys – purchased a year apart in the same killer bicycle shop at the base of famed Alpe d’Huez in France):



Bob Castle and John Van vlear, part way up Highway 168

About 8 miles into the climb (7,000 feet), the center line vanished and the 168 turned into a unique one lane road:



Hannes Richter leading the way



At 22 years old, Daniel Castle always seems to be thumbs up!

About 10 miles into the climb, we turned off Highway 168 onto White Mountain Road. Not bad to begin with, the undulating classic mountain road soon showed its teeth with short sections up to 17% gradient. Ouch! Grind, grind, grind we drug our bodies up the great mountain.

Finally, at mile 17 of the climb (9,000 feet), we made it to the Sierra View Vista Point.



The views of the Owens Valley deep below, and the Eastern Sierras beyond (with just a little snow remaining), were inspiring:



The final three miles were brutal. Climbing above 9,000 for the second time in three days, well over three hours of rolling time into the endeavor, concentration was at a premium. It was with great joy that I watched my Garmin altimeter click over from 9,997 to 10,002 feet elevation! We crested the summit into a mountain pass and the US Forest Service's Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest visitors center (the end of the paved road). At 10,152 feet, we conquered California's 2nd highest paved road and 2nd longest continuous >4% climb (6,204 feet gained).



John Van Vlear, Hannes Richter, Bob Castle, Daniel Castle

Short nature lesson. The Great Basin Bristlecone Pines (*Pinus longaeva*) grow only between 9,800 and 11,000 feet elevation, in harsh rocky soil. One such pine in this famous grove, nicknamed "Methuselah," is the oldest living thing on Earth – almost 5,000 years old (picture from Google):



A forest ranger we talked with said they were all thrilled because last year Methuselah had three pine cones, showing the tree was still healthy enough to reproduce after nearly 5 millennia. After buying bottled water from the visitor's center, we climbed slightly out of the peaceful mountain pass:



The last mile, as seen from above



The upper road - photo taken while riding downhill one-handed!



Some of the switchbacks; note White Mountain Road on the far right, miles below, near Highway 168



After one of the best recent descents, we once again reached Big Pine (here is the new asphalt section that can be seen in last year's photo taken from Glacier Lodge Road). 6 hours after starting, it was 107 degrees at the end.

Beyond Epic!



Please Support the Sustaining Members of the Orange County Wheelmen

Many sustaining members offer discounts to OCW members.

Tell them you are from OCW and continue to support those who support us!

TURNING 65 THIS YEAR?

Don't know if you should get Medicare Supplement/Medigap or Medicare Advantage? Call or Email Steve Davis 714.241.0366
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949.735.7605
tcmclain@legalshield.com

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