

The following is an essay regarding the recent 300K ride put on by the L.A. Wheelmen in conjunction with the Channel Islands B.C. on Saturday, Feb. 2. References to any person, living or dead, is purely intentional.

Are we having fun yet? Bill Griffith *Zippy the Pinhead (comic strip)*

The name of the person(s) who finish last in a cycling race (event) is the *Lanterne Rouge*, or Red Lantern, so named for the red lights attached to the rear of the last carriage or railroad car of a railroad train.

"Have fun and be safe". Bobbi Fisher

"The Red Lantern will be awarded to the person(s) finishing last today". David Nakai

Dear Gentle Reader,

These well-meaning and cogent words were spoken at the beginning of a recent bicycling event which was attended by 34 intrepid cyclists on a recent cold morning in early February. There was a time limit to this event and specific rules to be followed.

There are as many reasons for participating in events such as these as there are entrants. Who can say what a person's motivation is in attempting to challenge his or her self in a physically and mentally daunting environment. Demands on both the body and mind will be made during the course of the day that will strain expectations. Did I train right, or enough? Will my bicycle, my trusted "steed", perform up to expectations? Will I get lost following the route sheet? How well are my lights working? And, will I finish within the allotted time frame?

All of these, and more, questions roil around in the minds of all the entrants and are significant factors in the attitude one brings to the event. And, there are the expectations we carry, as well. How do we have fun and enjoy ourselves while trying to make sure we finish in time to qualify for other events? (The assumption here is **all** of us are staying safe). Many situations arise, naturally, in a twenty hour period. How one reacts to these situations determines whether one is having fun or not. Or whether the ride is too "serious" to allow one's self to have fun.

First a personal opinion of "fun": Fun is adapting and adjusting to an unexpected situation with humor and grace.

Okay, the "info" control was missed. Now what? If you are lucky, someone in your group has a Blackberry and a digital camera to record and send a picture of cyclists gathered at an intersection well beyond the "info" control. If you are not lucky you might ask someone who has been to the info site about what was missed. (Usually an answer to a question). Most people would be glad to help, even "Kranky" ones!

Or your front light is not working or keeps falling off. Again, if you are lucky, someone will have a spare light that fits your helmet or bike and you can continue your endeavor.

Or you get a flat tire ("Omgod") and have forgotten your pump; or your water bottle gets dumped after you hit a pothole and has landed on PCH.

Or, heaven forbid, you get lost in Montecito going up-hill. How do you face these unexpected situations with humor and grace?

You deal with unexpected situations by adopting a cheerful attitude and by understanding **why** you are here. **And with recognizing that the people with whom you are riding may need assistance.** Which brings us back to motivation. What is the reason that volunteers spend time at control stations? Why do organizers develop rides in which people challenge themselves? What is it in cyclists that provides the impetus to keep on going? The answers lie in the ideas of camaraderie and *bonhomie*. The idea of sharing what one can with good-natured casualness speaks well towards adjusting and adapting. There were at least two people on the ride who had "fun": Earl Magpiong and Tom Bunker, Old Kranks.

Congratulations to both of them (and all the riders) for completing their assigned tasks: First, for finishing, second, to Tom B. for smashing his PR by 100 kms., and lastly, for the two of them sharing the *Lanterne Rouge!* And to those of you who, for one reason or another, did not complete the ride, thank you for participating and thank you for your effort and determination.

This essay would not be complete without the heart-felt and grateful acknowledgement of those most un-sung of heroes: Our significant others without whom none of this would be possible. They allow us time to train, to buy "stuff", to accommodate our needs when necessary, to make sure we have all our "stuff", to, if not understand, at least respect our motivations, and to encourage us and lighten our load of anxiety.

By the way, the distance from Steve Martin's mailbox to Sheboygan, WI, is 2189.78 miles. (By car).

