

Three Intrepid Kranks Conquer 300 Kilometers

How do describe a ride that starts in the kind of weather that “normal” riders shun. It was a rainy Saturday morning when Earl, Carter, and Tom set out from the Best Western Hotel on Thompson Avenue in Ventura at 6:30 AM. Twenty-eight other souls started the journey with us. Somewhere along the route Earl uttered the phrase which was to become an oft repeated mantra for the journey, “*Ne pense pas!*” That means “Don’t think!” Just do it!

The routes were familiar, the weather was not. With resolve we set out for Lake Casitas following the bike path to the park where we turned left to the lake. The rain varied from light to moderate and thankfully never became a real downpour. It was just enough to dampen everything but our spirits and made it necessary to use our grit filled brakes more than we would have liked.

After a quick stop at the lake, we were off to climb the pass. Climbing was not a problem since we were going slowly enough. No worries about slipping there. At the summit the story changed drastically. The usually enjoyable downhill coast became an exercise in careful decent. The rain seemed to pick this time to get harder. This combined with the increased speed took the rain that had been falling straight down and drove it into our faces.

Turning onto the familiar hwy 192, the ride to the polo field was uneventful and the rain lessened a bit. At the polo field it was a right turn as we headed for the always interesting Toro Canyon. I was more than a little surprised when my bike wouldn’t shift into my granny ring. I was even more surprised when I climbed that short, steep road anyways.

The route continued on hwy 192, taking us through parts of Montecito that we don’t often ride. The next stop was at the market on the corner of San Ysidro and hwy 192. There we had our cards stamped and had a coffee.

The usual route from there would be to take Mountain Road (Steve Martin’s mailbox ride). Instead we followed a detour to avoid possible mud-slides. Not five minutes on the road and I had my first chance to change a tire in the rain. As we continued to the Santa Barbara waterfront, the rain stopped. Meandering through Santa Barbara we rejoined Hwy 192 which was now Foothill Blvd.

As we continued, the rain had not only stopped but the pavement was also drier. By the time we reached the 101, it was actually pretty pleasant. We turned north and reached our northern most check point at El Capitan State Beach. There we reconnected with Jeff from Whittier. We had seen him at the start and along the road. He decided to join us for the rest of the ride.

The 101 south looks very much like the 101 north and that section of ride went quickly, or I just didn’t notice anything of interest. Exiting on Hollister, the route would change

from the very familiar to slightly unknown. That's because much of the Krank's train ride goes down Hollister, but our detour onto trails cuts out large parts of it.

After touring Hope Ranch, we reached Shoreline Park on the cliff looking onto the ocean. By now, it was downright pretty. The skies were clear, it was a little warmer, and we had lunch at the control stop.

We took the usual route back to Ventura, using the bike path around Ortega Hill and going straight on Via Real instead of taking Padaro Lane. We made it most of way back before dark. Visibility was still pretty good as we went through Emma Woods Park.

Just a few minutes from the hotel, the rain returned. It was not enough to put out a cigarette, but still unpleasant. The hotel was the official start and end point of the ride, but was not an official control station at this point in the ride. None-the-less, we grabbed what we wanted from our cars and were pleasantly surprised to find that Lisa Jones had hot, home made chicken noodle soup waiting for us.

Fortified and ready to go, we were pleased to find that the rain had stopped. Thankfully, it would never return for the duration of the ride. I did have a bit of a mental lapse at this point where Carter and I became separated from Earl and Jeff. With San Jon St. closed, we turned back to California St. to cross the freeway to Harbor Blvd. We saw Earl and Jeff and shouted to them, but weren't sure they heard us. I never saw them turn around and was unsure if they were behind us or seeking an alternate route. After a few minutes of slow riding, Carter and I pressed on and knew that we would regroup at the next control station in Port Hueneme.

So we followed Harbor Blvd. to Channel Islands and then turned right on Ventura Blvd. The control station was a Wendy's on Ventura Blvd and we did soon regroup there. At this point we had passed the 200K milestone and both Jeff and Carter were setting new personal bests with each passing mile.

Shortly after leaving Wendy's on Hueneme Rd. I had my first chance to change a flat in the dark. After such a prolonged flat-free period, karma is rebalancing my account.

The ride continued along Hueneme/Lewis bringing us to Pleasant Valley/Santa Rosa in Camarillo. No time for the burger Barn (closed anyways). Just before we reached the school at the end of Santa Rosa Rd, Carter didn't see some low hanging tree limbs and took a tumble. Damages to the bike and rider were assessed and both were good to go.

We pressed on into Moorpark to a Chevron station on the corner of Spring and LA Ave. Time for some O.J. and something to eat before setting out on the final challenging climb.

Spring Street has very good pavement with wide bike lanes. It ends at Hwy 23 where we turned right to summit Grimes Canyon. It wasn't an epic climb, but darn close to it. Four set out and four arrived at the summit at mile 163.

After a two second celebration, we started the descent. Darkness and sharp curves added to the fun. At least we didn't have to pedal. At Bardsdale we turned left and made our way to Mountain Road. With no more large climbs ahead, we made good time to Santa Paula where we hit another Chevron. It was 12:45 when we pulled into the station. That gave us 1 hour and 45 minutes to catch a quick snack and make the final push to the finish. We were at mile 176 and heading for mile 191. That sounded reasonable.

We rode down a deserted main Street and turned onto Telegraph Road. With good pavement and no steep climbs we made good time. A long downhill coast near the end offered additional help to make the finish.

At 2:07 AM the four of us crossed the finish. *Les Lanternes rouges arrivent!* The red lanterns arrive!

The Old Kranks continue to be a force to be reckoned with.

Ne pense pas!

Tom