

Stacy Crawley, Marty Lieske, Tom Pritchard, Andy Williams and I met at the KDH Rehab Center for a ride. Stacy and Tom rode from home. Andy rode from some nondescript back door of Calvary Baptist Church. (We think service was over, but only Andy knows for sure!) Our route took us out-and-back to Canaan.

We headed North on Michigan Road again, and I can report that "Pickle Station Road" is only signed as "350N" (It's a much smaller sign that way!) Marty was having some difficulty with shifting and was to find out why later. As we turned North, the tailwind outbound was awesome! We took a short break in China and teased Marty insensitively about his shifting problems and possible karmic connection to bike club dues.

There's been some discussion in recent days about the climb from the bottom of Irwin Hill going towards Canaan on Highway 62. Sure enough, the creek does run in the opposite direction before making a left turn to China. However, the tailwind neutralized any possible inclinations from gravity on this point today. There is a proper climb before you reach China, which no tailwind will salve (at least not one you'd want to ride in), and we collected ourselves at the top of this hill in the open where we could fully appreciate the magnitude of the blast we were enjoying now and would fight on the way home. Various reports through the afternoon indicated 15-18mph wind speed.

We hadn't reached our planned hour of outbound riding time as we reached China, and discussed going farther. We had been talking about the hill after Canaan which descends to the Indian-Kentuck Creek on 62/250. (The Meander takes this.) Well, apparently, this is a "Category 5" climb and you may wonder what this means, as we did. Stacy looked it up and MapMyRide climbs must be at least 500m long and 3% grade for a rating. Ratings of 5 to 1 in increasing difficulty are made from an undisclosed computation of distance, average grade, elevation change and maximum grade. Those more difficult than "1" are HC or *hors-categorie*, from French ("outside of category"; I found another reference which indicated *hors-categorie* was also used to describe mountain roads that cars could not go over!) Strava rates climbs with a direct formula of length(m) X average grade(%) and their score thresholds for categories 4,3,2,1,HC (in thousands) are: 8, 16, 32, 64 and 80. Aren't you glad you asked? Well, there was some discussion at the TOP of this hill about whether we should descend and then climb it, and after some gentle cajoling, most of us did, except Tom, who wisely decided to wait it out at the top. This afforded him ample opportunity to photograph us cresting the summit, with the assistance of an exuberant, but friendly dog with mud on his nose, who insisted on barking up and chasing ALL of the passing cars. Tom has posted these shots on the MABC website. Marty reported that this hill is about 250ft of elevation change, but I've forgotten the gradient he mentioned.

The next phase of our journey was all about wind. And some other things. As we approached the bottom of Irwin Hill, we heard three bursts of automatic gunfire back on the hillside, an unmistakable sound. It reminded Marty of a kayaking story from the Ohio River last fall which he told us at the bottom of Irwin Hill. Tom explained that Irwin Hill (the Highway 250 hill up to Graham Road) is so-called because of Irwin Farms which used to be at the top, with its orange-painted outbuildings. After some discussion about alternate routes, we agreed to climb Irwin Hill.

On Graham Road, Stacy got a call. It was Tom and he had a flat. Did he need help? No, of course not, he said, go on ahead. But did we listen? No, of course not. In the short jaunt North (tailwind!) to find

Tom, Marty discovered that he couldn't shift his rear derailleur off the smallest cog, and after a brief investigation, that his derailleur cable was, in fact, broken. This certainly explained his shifting problems earlier. (hmm....about those bike club dues...?) While Tom attended to his tire, we extracted Marty's spent cable and jammed a stick in his rear derailleur mechanism to shift it up to a kinder cog for the final three headwind-miles back to the start. Stacy documented to Facebook in near real-time.

So, there you have it. We got back to KDH with about 28.5 miles. Stacy and Tom will have a bit more to reach home. Another blustery day, but good to get out while the weather is still warm. Thanks to those who participated !

Jon