

Waves to Wine Ride (MS Benefit Ride)  
September, 2008

It all started at 6:45AM in the San Francisco Giants parking lot. It was a gorgeous morning, very still and quiet, except for the hundreds of bikers. I was standing in a VERY well lit parking lot with a sea of spandex covered human billboards. I was sporting my typical black on black outfit.

My team, otherwise known as “Eddie’s Crew” rolled up and greeted me warming, which was welcome on this chilly morning. Since they are a casual group, we finally hit the road at 7:30AM and were told we have to be across the Golden Gate Bridge by 8AM or we’d be SagWagged. “Oh My” I thought, that doesn’t give us much time!

Heading across town we hit EVERY red light, it became a soundtrack: RED LIGHT “schreeeech” (brakes), “uggghhhh” (sigh)- GREEN LIGHT “clack, clack, clack” (clips in pedals) – Repeat this about 30 times (ok, I wasn’t actually counting but you get the picture) – it was a bit tiresome.

We were almost to the GG Bridge, and I head up the hill I get the first flat for the group. 3 tubs with holes later the SagWag comes by and my Mr. Hero has one tube left for mountain bikes. As a quick side note, I’m doing this ride on a mountain bike, which I didn’t think was a big deal but many rides passing me by all weekend commented about how brave I was to be doing such a ride on a mountain bike. Which was funny, because I thought the same thing of them as I thought about the skinny wheels of their road bike hitting the rough road on Highway 1. After a quick tube change (nice to have others around me that do this ALL the time) I was off – Mr. Hero is letting me ride through although we are about 30 minutes behind.

We arrived at our first (official) rest stop, which happened to be at Mike’s Bike shop so I was able to load up on a few extra tubes for the rest of the ride. We we’re off again. Next rest stop (unofficial) waiting for the rest of the team who decided to go ahead and take a wrong turn - cell phones are a great invention. The next rest stop (unofficial) was at the top of our first big hill, which gave me time to chat up the experienced bike trainer in the group for techniques: when the first riders make it to the top of a hill, they go back down and push the slow poke but note that he was telling me about it but not actually doing it. Our beginner in the group was the brother-in-law of the team captain and it was his first time on a bike in over 10 years, using clips for the first time and he just stopped smoking about 30 hours before the ride – brave or insane? He, his wife, and another team member are walking up the hill.

Finally, we were off again (we are all taking turns slowing each other down) and heading down the first steep downhill, SWEET! I hit 36 mph, I think I could have gone faster if the motorcycle in front of us wasn’t there - this makes the uphill soooooo worth it! The next rest stop (unofficial) was waiting for the rest of the group that gets nervous going downhill. Second (official) rest stop – Stinson beach, it’s 11:30AM and we’ve gone about 26 miles - oh my, we are slow. I let our captain know that I’m going to have to go ahead if I’m going to make it to the end, he tells me to go for it. This is the part of the story where I feel like I have to explain that I didn’t play team sports growing up and sometimes don’t really “feel” the team spirit – I don’t mind going solo and feel like a bad team player (but I really wanted to try to finish and knew they didn’t really “need” me).

I cranked it up – they were closing the last rest stop when I left so I knew I had to make up some time. My knees has been tender, but mainly because we kept stopping and my legs would get cold and cramp. The next 15 miles were gorgeous - Highway 1 is amazing! I reluctantly passed Tony’s Restaurant, BBQ Oysters – YUMMY! Next (official) rest stop was in Point Reyes, the roads are rolling and beautiful , I’m lovin’ life (and still ignoring my knee). I stop at the rest stop, shake out the legs (going at a good pace now), scarf a little energy and off I go. Next stop is lunch – real food sounds good.

My left knee is starting to really get tender, so I slow it down and start using the granny gear a lot sooner up hills – slow and steady. The Big Yellow Truck has passed me by (clean up truck) so I come to terms with possibly forgoing lunch. Slow and Steady, only a few more miles until I can rest.... SNAP, POP and maybe even a CRACKLE. My knee stops moving immediately and hence, so do I. I'm glad I'm on a relatively flat part of the road, I can't put pressure on my leg (damn, I get off on that side of the bike – not good at switching sides). Deep breaths, I try to relax... it's not working. As I'm practicing my deep breathing techniques (yoga is good for something), my Mr. Hero #2 drives up – “Are you ok?” I get SagWagged to lunch, only a couple miles away (I tell myself I'll make them up later). When I got there all but the team captain and his best friend are there – everyone else got SagWagged much earlier on. One veggie burrito left – I split it with the other veggie in the group and we swear it's the best burrito we've ever had (amazing how fantastic a seasoning hard work is for food). I get some ice and pop some pills for dessert. 55 miles for the day. The captain and friend continue on and finish the entire 75 mile ride for the day – they rock! Total for the group: 3 flats, 2 falls, 1 lost camera, & lots of sore bums.

I get picked up by my Sebastopol buds and I rehash the day over shots of wine at the Beer & Wine garden, lots of fantastic free stuff at the final stop of the day – pain reliever cream (YES!). We head to their place for the night. I was so thankful to shower the grime of the road off, drink good wine and indulge in sushi. A great way to recharge for the next day's adventure

Day 2 – I wake and my muscles don't feel sore – very nice delight and I'm so thankful for the hours in the gym. My knee is tender but I walked to dinner the night before and it felt good after a rest. I'm giving day 2 my “Go Team” effort. I arrive at 6:30AM ready to go by 7:00AM and the group finally arrives and assembles to take off just as the announcer is saying we must leave within 5 minutes (before 8AM) or we will be SagWagged. I'm learning I'm the only morning person in the group. Since we are all hurting so we decided to do the shorter 50 mile route today. It's CHILLY, my knee is stiff and not wanting to cooperate, I start slow to give it a good warm up. I fall behind pretty quick, but tell the group to go ahead. At 6 miles I'm already wondering how I'm going to manage today. After mile 14 I decided that I'll just take it super slow and just go as far as I can, stopping for a few pictures along the way – that makes the ride more relaxing. Yeah! The first rest stop and just as I'm pulling up “Eddie's Crew” is about to take off – with concern they ask how I am and I assure them that I'll be fine and to not wait at the next stop for me – roll on. I energize up and I'm off – slow and steady.

“Boooshhhhh,” it's a new day so I have a new flat. I think about the previous bike trips I've taken and realize I've never gotten a flat before, so I guess I'm catching up. I'm prepared this time and it's not hard at all (yesterday's lesson helped). Back up and cranking (slowly) through beautiful terrain of vineyards and apple orchards (delicious). Second official rest stop is just across a very cool bridge in the wine country (love this area!). I rest a bit this time, energize up and decide I can keep going – only 14 miles to the next stop. I start out and there is a hill straight away, so it doesn't give me time to warm up - SNAP, POP and this time there was a CRACKLE! I'm on a hill, I stop abruptly and land harshly on my left leg, I buckle but use the bike to catch myself (a few obscenities exerted just as a rider was passing me by... poor girl... she asked how I was and I managed a strained “FINE”). She rode on and I caught my breath. Good news, a quick turn around and it's downhill straight to the rest stop so I don't have to peddle. I cruise in straight to the Med station and arrange for a SagWag to take me to the end. As I sit in the SagWag all I think of is how GOREGOUS the road are and how I want to ride them. I will be back to do this route again. I manage 30 miles for the day. The rest of the group made it to the end! The most amazing is the newbie smoker made it! I found out later he was on the Chicago Fire Department – where boys become men and he certainly showed me what he was made of.

The MS Society did an awesome job of supporting the riders and being so incredibly organized. If you're looking for an awesome ride in beautiful terrain – this is the one to do! I'm bummed I wasn't able to finish and have the ride I imagined, but there is always next year. Thanks to everyone that supported me for this wonderful ride, I'm sorry I wasn't able to finish!