

Exploring the Environs-2/12/17

by Anne Trank

About 16 riders gathered at the Corner for this Sunday's Club ride. Except for Jacques Stern, none of the usual club riders were there, and I was the only woman. There was a century ride on Saturday, so I guess those who rode were recovering. Joining the ride was a young newcomer wearing a tee-shirt and shorts and riding an old, heavy vintage bike. From the looks of it, I didn't think he would be able to ride very far, but he was very strong and was one of the first to get to the top of all the steep canyons and streets. Also joining us was a rider from Vancouver, who comes to Los Angeles every winter. As he explained, the mountains and the ocean make riding around LA much more interesting than riding in Vancouver and the weather of course. Because of potentially more traffic, it was unanimously decided to climb up Benedict Canyon instead of Beverly Glen as per the route slip.

With clear blue skies, and cool, clean air after the recent rain, it was a beautiful day. Visibility was amazing, and the San Fernando Valley looked enormous from the top of Mulholland. As we climbed up the steep canyon, strong riders got ahead, and the group naturally spread out, but we all regrouped at the top. Along the way, Dave Wyman who got to various picturesque spots way ahead of everyone, stopped to take photos. The quiet but steep streets in the hills above the valley can be quite challenging, and at the top of our last climb, someone said that the climb was ridiculously steep, 17% according to someone else. Rick Gordon led the way and rode back and forth effortlessly accompanying slower riders, and making sure no one was left behind. But then somehow, "the rabbi," managed to disappear again. Again, because apparently, several weeks ago, he disappeared on a ride and was not seen or heard from again. But all was well, as Rick called Dave and learned that the two were riding together and would meet us at our designated lunch spot. By this time, Mel Cutler was getting very hungry and all he talked about was what he would order for lunch. Some of us were hoping to have lunch up at Topanga Village, but Mel said that he couldn't last till then. On the way to lunch, however, Mel saw another place that looked better than the lunch spot on the route, so he and another rider went to Stone Fire Grill, and the rest to Starbucks and Jama Juice next door and were shortly joined by Dave and the Rabbi who rode back the few intersections from the original lunch spot. We were finally all together again resting and enjoying our food. After lunch, Dave and the Canadian fellow took off as they were much faster, and needed to get home. The young newcomer headed back before because he originally allotted enough time for the short ride. With fresh fuel on board, we started our climb up Old Topanga Canyon Rd, which was steep but quiet and peaceful compare to all the traffic noise and congestion on the busy thoroughfares of the valley.

We regrouped at the top of the ridge and then the village, then descended down New Topanga Canyon Rd, which is one of the most terrifying routes for me. Rick stayed close by and guided me along the narrow, often shoulderless road. At one point, I yelled, Oh My Lordy and the Rabbi, who was behind responded, "I'm right behind you." Sweet. By the way, the Rabbi's name is Meilech Leib, but goes by Rabbi because it's easier to remember and pronounce. Led by Rick and swapped by Mel, we stayed together on PCH, another favorite route (not really). But, once on the bike path, it felt like the danger was over, and I was happy to ride back on familiar San Vicente, through the VA, and down Charleville. Along the way, riders peeled off as they rode back home and the remaining two of us returned back to the corner feeling tired but safe and happy. (PS. Sorry, but I forgot some names)