

A photograph of two cyclists riding down a dirt trail in the Santa Cruz Mountains. The cyclist in the foreground is wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt and black shorts, riding a yellow road bike. The cyclist behind him is also wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt and black shorts, riding a black road bike. The trail is muddy and rocky, with dense green and brown vegetation on either side.

Adventure Rides in the
Santa Cruz Mountains

Gazos Creek Washout

Loma Prieta's Dirty Bump

Corn Roast Frolic

Haul Road, and more...

CONTENTS

4 Gazos Creek Road

Heavy winter rains turn ride into hike

8 Sea to Skyline

Vain attempt to find a way from ocean to
Big Basin

10 Corn Roast

We cool our heels in East Waddell Creek

14 Romancing the Moon

A moonlight ride up Old La Honda Road

16 Alpine Road

Life and death of the bike road to Skyline

20 Loma Prieta

Riding the wildlands of southern Santa
Clara County

26 Haul Road

A former train route deep in the redwoods

32 From the Publisher

Memories never age





(Cover: Jobst Brandt, *Peter Johnson on Alpine Road*, 1988)

Gazos Creek Wa

APRIL 18, 1982

RIDERS: Jobst Brandt, Jim Westby, Ray Hosler, Ted Mock, Tom Ritchey, Dave Faust, Marc Brandt (Jobst's nephew), Tim Louis, Frank ?, Tom Sullivan, Jan Causey, Unknown rider.

Route: Palo Alto, California: Up Alpine Road; south on Skyline Boulevard to Highway 9, down

9 to Highway 236; up China Grade; down Johansen Road; down Gazos Creek Road; Cloverdale Road north; up Pescadero Road to Highway 84 and return home; 75 miles.

WEATHER: Clear, warm.

TIRE/MECHANICAL FAILURE: Ted—flat; Jobst—flat; Dave—broken rear derailleur; Marc—bent rear wheel.



Riders assemble as they come off Johansen Road onto Gazos Creek Road.

A raindrop isn't a potent force, but when it marshals its diminutive form into a downpour, it can be deadly. Man's creations become Tinker Toys in a deluge. Tall redwoods uproot and crash downstream with boulders.

This winter the Santa Cruz Mountains felt the fury of the raindrop army, and riders suffered the results of a wet season on their sacred ground.

Riders gathered at Jobst's house for a fair-weather ride. Jan arrived without Peter, her boyfriend [and later husband], who was home in bed. Tom Ritchey waited for us on Skyline, hoping his pregnant wife, Katie, wouldn't deliver while he was away.

STUNG BY A BEE

A rider on his first Jobst Ride stood next to his bike, with its distinctive fat aluminum tubes, as Jobst and others burst outside onto the front

shout

lawn. Jobst looked at the rider's shiny fat-tube bike and bellowed, "It looks like your bike was stung by a bee!"

Jobst took our photo standing on the front porch, and then we were off. Right after crossing the railroad tracks on Alma, a police cruiser behind us blared, "Stay to the right of the road!" But everyone was intent on crossing El Camino Real. We blasted across to Stanford Shopping Center.

The ride went without incident until the upper reaches of Alpine Road, where we saw the first evidence of winter's heavy rains. A large section of road had collapsed, as though from an earthquake. We dismounted and walked our bikes across the sinkhole.

After assembling at the intersection of Page Mill Road and Skyline Boulevard, where Tom joined us, we headed south on Skyline. We stopped at the fire station to tank up on water. At Highway 9, Tom Sullivan, the mystery rider, and Frank turned left back to the valley.

Jobst began his usual furious descent, with everyone else going for the draft on a 40 mph



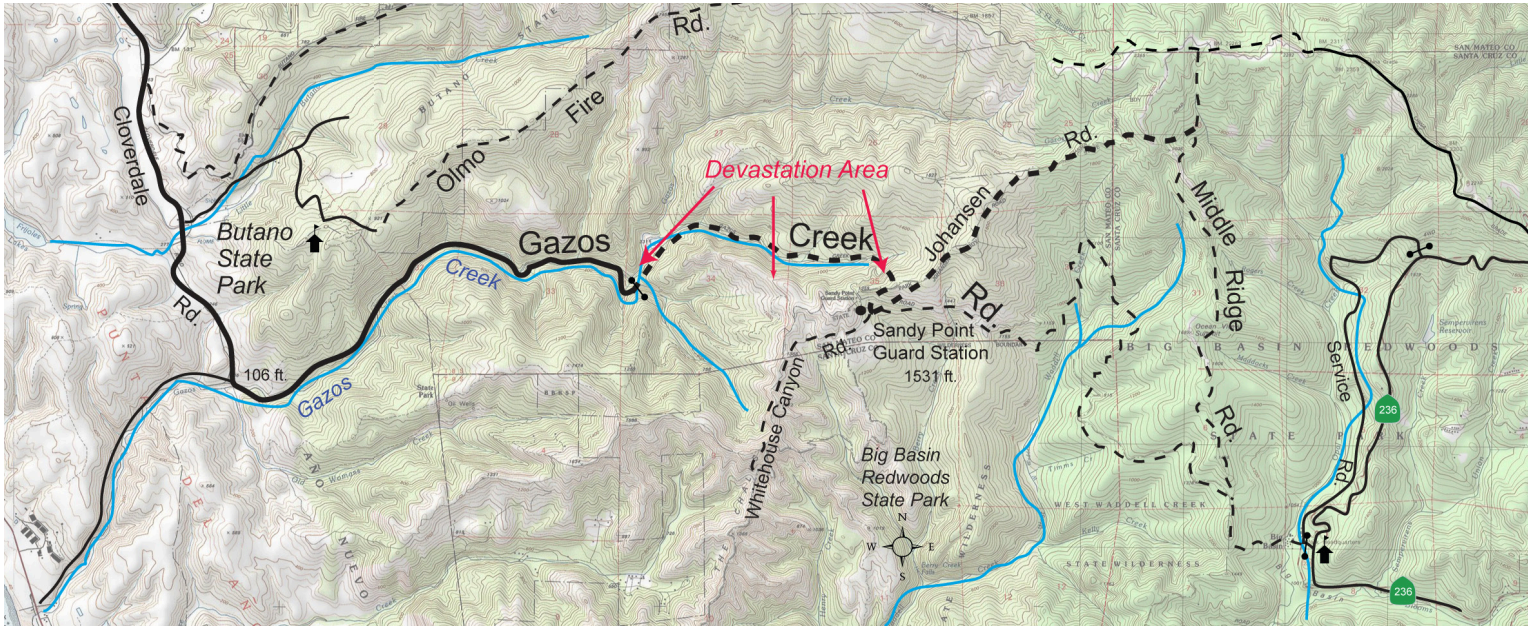
Ted makes his way down Gazos Creek Road.

joy ride. We had the good fortune of riding on Hwy 236 free of traffic. The road was closed to repair a landslide, but passable on bikes. Just before China Grade, Jobst amazed everyone by dismounting and carrying his bike up the side of a hill. We thought we could beat Jobst, so we picked up the pace and raced around the curve. Jobst won handily, much to our chagrin.

JOHANSEN ROAD

As we climbed China Grade, the Pacific Ocean and a vast redwood forest came into view. The greens and blues painted an unforgettable tapestry on this warm, sunny Spring day.

We rode to nearly the end of China Grade before heading left down Johansen's, an old



logging road [now part of Big Basin State Park]. Considering the heavy rains, it was in good shape. Ted flattened. I stayed to help while the other riders went ahead. We met the group at Gazos Creek Road, where Jobst was busily straightening Marc's bent wheel, and Jim was nursing a sore knee from a fall.

[Gazos Creek Road is a steep dirt road linking Big Basin park with Cloverdale Road. It's a favorite route for today's mountain bike rider, but in 1982 the only riders who took it were Jobst and friends.]

WHERE'S THE ROAD?

What followed can only be described as a nightmare vision of nature's fury unleashed. The road vanished, replaced by a raging creek and downed

redwoods. If not for the creek, we would never have known where to go. In the brief rideable section, Dave bent his rear derailleur roller wheels when a stick jammed them. It didn't matter at this point that he couldn't ride, because we walked the next mile, picking our way through fallen trees. We scrambled over logs and boulders,



Watch out for newts crossing the road in winter.



Ted, Jim, and Dave follow the creek.

wondering if we would ever reach a rideable road.

After a while we came to a clearing and took a break. Jobst and Tom noticed Dave's difficulties. When Dave said his bike was broken, Tom looked concerned, having built Dave's bike. He became visibly relieved when he found out it was just the derailleur.

Jobst and Tom set to fixing Dave's derailleur. Tom grabbed a couple of large rocks and pounded on the roller cages. Using the tools of cave men, they operated on a highly refined piece of steel manufactured halfway around the world. They fixed it well enough that Dave could grind out a turn or two on his cranks.

NEWT'S FROLIC

Jobst walked to an inviting pool of water and looked down. "I see a couple of newts," he said. Marc went over to investigate, coaxing the newts into activity. "Don't worry," Jobst said, "they have to come up for air."

[Speaking of newts, on one ride Jobst put a newt into the water bottle of Nikola Farac-Ban or "Bike Barb," a well-known San Francisco rider. He was not amused.]

More scrambling followed, Ted dropping his bike down a steep cliff when he made a bad choice in the tangle of trees. We used our bikes as crutches, clambering log to log. Along the way, we saw a beautiful waterfall. I spotted a tiny red snake.



Dave works on his bike as Ted and Jim look on.

BLEATING SHEEP

At the final gate, the road finally became a road, but we still had to cross the raging Gazos Creek where a bridge had washed out. We walked across the creek and then encountered a herd of bleating sheep. On the flat section before Cloverdale Road we tried to avoid huge mud holes, but to no avail.

Soon we were covered in mud. Dave struggled along as riders pushed him. At Cloverdale Road, Dave found a ride to Loma Mar, where we'd meet again and Jobst would make more permanent repairs. After chowing down in Loma Mar, we headed up Pescadero Road and home.



MAY 21, 1983

RIDERS: Jobst Brandt, Ray Hosler, Tom Holmes, Tom Ritchey, Parker McComas, Bill Robertson, Paul Mittelstadt

ROUTE: From Palo Alto, California: up Old LaHonda Road, down Old LaHonda Road to Hwy 84; Pescadero Road, Cloverdale Road, Hwy 1, south to Waddell Creek; Skyline to the Sea Trail; to Big Basin Redwoods State Park; Hwy 236, Hwy 9, Skyline Boulevard, Page Mill Road. 90 miles.

WEATHER: Cool and foggy, then clear and warm; then cool and foggy on the coast, then clear and warm in Big Basin.

TIRE/MECHANICAL FAILURE: Paul—flat.



Paul Mittelstadt walks across one of many landslides next to Waddell Creek.

I knew this was going to be a crazy ride when Jobst said before leaving that he had no idea where he was going. By the time we reached Loma Mar store, our numbers had dwindled and we still didn't know where we were headed. Finally, I suggested Santa Cruz and then we were off.

On Cloverdale, Jobst spotted a turkey vulture dining on a disemboweled cow (still alive). Otherwise the ride went without incident. Even Cloverdale was in great shape [it wasn't paved then]. It was foggy on the coast so Jobst started having other ideas. When we reached Waddell Creek, he suggested we search out a trail to Big Basin State Park.

Everything went smoothly at first. The trail—an old logging road—climbed gently through the

redwoods, Monterey pine, and marshlands. We saw the occasional hiker, too. After several miles we came to a sign that said the trail was closed from recent flooding. That was Jobst's cue for another "adventure ride."

LANDSLIDE BLOCKS WAY

In less than a mile we came to a landslide blocking the trail. There was no way through except to go around and up a hill, which we did for about a mile. When we arrived at the creek there was no way across but to

walk our bikes through. The road

Skyline

steepened gradually, but we still hadn't reached the steep climb we knew was coming. At the junction with Skyline to the Sea Trail, Jobst chose a road that went to the right.



Tom carefully walks his bike over the bridge.

It was a good dirt road, but it didn't last for long. The road became more and more overgrown. At one point we walked our bikes over a wooden plank with a 15-foot drop into Waddell Creek. We left the creek behind as the climb continued. Finally the road ended in a grassy area. A dead deer lay nearby under a cloud of flies. Jobst climbed into a thicket of young redwoods, searching for the road. We had encountered a massive landslide.

Soon Jobst was yelling to Tom as they probed for a way through. Would this modern-day Davy Crockett find his way? Not this time. Jobst concluded that the landslide was impenetrable. We had to go back.

There was only one way into the park, and that was on the narrow Skyline to the Sea Trail. [The trail is closed to bicycles, but in 1983 mountain bikes were scarce.] The trail was hardly rideable, so we walked along with the hikers, towing our bikes.

BERRY CREEK FALLS

In the early going we came across Berry Creek Falls; waterfalls are rare in the Santa Cruz Mountains. A man sat on a bench admiring the view. "Don't you wish you could take that home with you," he said. I did the next best thing and took a picture. After several miles of climbing, the trail crested and we began a swift descent.

At park headquarters we had a bite to eat before the climb on Hwy 236 and 9 in the shimmering heat, a fitting end to another ride in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

JUNE 7, 1981

RIDERS: Jobst Brandt, Jim Westby, Rick Humphreys, Ray Hosler, Parker McComas, Roger Leff, Tom Ritchey, Tom Holmes, Dan Green

ROUTE: From Palo Alto, California: up Alpine Road to Page Mill Road; south on Skyline Boulevard, down Hwy 9, Hwy 236 to Big Basin State Park; Last Chance Road to Swanton Road and town of Swanton, returning same route. 88 miles.

WEATHER: Warm and clear

TIRE/MECHANICAL FAILURE: Rick—flat; Ray—broken rear spoke

Anually in early June, Jobst and friends ride to the “town” of Swanton on the Pacific Coast to enjoy bluegrass music at the Corn Roast. It’s a modest affair in the redwoods on a hay-covered hillside. Hundreds of people show up to hear the music, buy locally produced arts and crafts, and chow down on beer, burritos, corn, and other good food. [The Corn Roast ended at this location in 1988.]

Leave it to Jobst to find an interesting way



to get there. Last Chance Road is one of his favorite wheeling grounds. The ride takes us through the East Waddell Creek drainage following a narrow canyon with waterfalls and cliffs. This Sunday morning a gaggle of riders arrived at Jobst’s doorstep at the appointed 8 a.m. start. Rick decided to pump his tire, but discovered it was flat. We were already losing precious time and behind schedule.

Corn Roast



Tom Ritchey joined us on Skyline and we continued south to the fire station, where Jobst stopped for water and then sped off to meet Roger Leff at the Hwy 9 junction.

Hwy 9 snakes downhill through the redwoods to Santa Cruz, offering cyclists a whirlwind descent. It's not too twisty or too steep to slow you down. You can just blast, and blast Jobst did.

A SWARM OF ANGRY HORNETS

Our black shorts, colorful jerseys, and the whirring sound of freewheels reminded me of a swarm of angry hornets flying along at more than 40 mph. We jockeyed for position behind the head hornet, Jobst. He's not only a great descender, but



Our favorite place to stop at the Big Basin Redwoods State Park headquarters, 1981.

his 6'5" frame creates the best wind break.

Swooshing off Hwy 9 at the Hwy 236 junction, we immediately began climbing on the narrow, twisty road. The climb took the sting out of our group and we proceeded at a slower pace, but not for long.

Tom, Rick, Dan, and I blasted off, not wanting to miss out on the burritos. We didn't let up until

China Grade, where the road descends into the forest and park headquarters.

We took the narrow Service Road and continued downhill into the cool, dank redwood forest headed for the Big Basin Redwoods State Park store. While refueling, conversation turned to the cool beers waiting for us over the hill.

Our group headed off, turning right at

the Blooms Creek campground, also the paved access road to the water treatment plant, before climbing a dirt road for a few hundred yards and then taking the crucial left turn onto unsigned Last Chance Road.

From here we found ourselves riding on washboards, trails, and rocky roads until the coast. The first part of the road is rocky, with sandpits and short, steep uphill that make going tough. The final approach to Waddell Creek is so steep and loose that only a few road bike riders can make it without walking [not so bad now, but overgrown].

CROSSING WADDELL CREEK

We dismounted and crossed Waddell Creek. Leaping from rock to rock and using our bikes as crutches, most of us made it without getting our feet wet. On the other side, we continued on a single track following the cascading creek in the rocky canyon. Depending on the past winter's rains, it can be rideable or covered with boulders and debris.

On this occasion we could ride, but even then it was a challenge on a road bike. This went on for about a mile before we came to a steep climb on a "road" over sandstone bedrock. It's hardly a road now, hidden by Scotch broom and pampas grass.

The climb tested our legs in places, but we all made it without dismounting. The end of the climb brought us to a respectable dirt road, only now we



Crossing Waddell Creek on Last Chance Road, 1982.

faced six miles of bone-jarring washboard. We passed numerous modest wood-frame houses, occupied by burned out hippies, survivalists, and people who enjoy solitude.

Parker had trouble with his seat, so we told him we'd meet him at the gate where the pavement begins, which was a "mile down the road," according to Jim. But it was more like four miles.

He blasted down the bumpy paved road with a car right behind him. The landowner obligingly opened the gate for himself and for us to pass. We took a group photo next to the Pacific Ocean.

All that remained was a quick descent to Swanton, hidden away in the redwoods several miles from the coast. We walked our bikes up a hill and dumped them in some blackberry bushes. While enjoying the music, we had our fill of beer and burritos.

After a while, Rick and Dan decided to head to Santa Cruz. Tom, Jim, Parker, and I started back the way we came. In the baking afternoon sun we walked our bikes up the steep section of trail next



Jobst and friends kick back and listen to country music.

to Waddell Creek. Tom looked to his left and saw a waterhole. "Let's check it out," he said.

So we put down our bikes and dashed into the creek to cool off. Pretty soon we were splashing around and enjoying ourselves, dropping down into deep body-size pools. We found a small waterfall and enjoyed the refreshingly cool water.

Reality eventually set in and we knew it was time to leave. We dressed, got back on our bikes and struggled over the hills and steep dirt road back to park headquarters. We still had to climb Hwy 236 and Hwy 9, but it was well worth the effort. [In 2014, that waterhole was still there.]



Tom, Parker, and Jim take a refreshing dip in East Waddell Creek right off Last Chance Road.

Just when I thought I had lost it, there it was. My love affair with the bike found a new romance. We met on a warm summer night under the light of a full moon.

We rendezvoused on Skyline Boulevard, a ribbon of pavement perched on the crest of the Coast Range running from San Francisco to San Jose. From atop this ridge you can see the Pacific Ocean and to the east there's Santa Clara Valley. In the distance on a clear day you'll see the Sierra Nevada.

I've ridden on Skyline at sunrise and at sunset, in the fog and clouds, on clear and on smoggy days, but never at night.

We started from Palo Alto, riding past high-powered venture capital firms on Sand Hill Road and then into the rural setting of Portola Valley. One of the darkest roads to Skyline is Old LaHonda, a 1,200-foot climb.

The moon shone fitfully through breaks in a canopy of redwoods and tan oak. Under the white light of the moon, with our colorful cycling garb, we looked like ghosts drifting through the trees.

In this Stygian darkness I saw monsters—behind a tree, ahead in the middle of the road. But they let us pass with nary a boo to be heard. The headless rider must be right around the bend.

Alone in the night, we enthused about the ride. "Hey, I wonder if our eyes glow in the dark like deer when we see car lights," said Dave. "This reminds me of a dream I had," another rider chimed. "Or is this a dream?" "Watch out for bug lamps," Sterling yelled. "Don't be drawn in by the light!"

The one-liners continued as we made our way up





the mountain, bike lights showing the way. “On your left. Watch out for the hole. Which one? The one I just rode through.” Bump! “You found it!” The climb had never gone so fast, or so it seemed. Night riding creates a sensation of speed.

As we climbed, someone asked the inevitable, “Has anyone ever fixed a flat in the dark?”

From the bald top of Windy Hill we looked down on the valley bathed in the glow of incandescent light. To the north, the skyscrapers of San Francisco glowed like inverted chandeliers. Mt. Diablo loomed in the east, an ink-black spot. The still, warm air cast a surreal quality over the scene and I couldn’t help but think life is still a mystery.

With the flash of my camera, I captured another memorable event on film, evidence photos for the grandchildren I suppose. Six people on top of a mountain under a full moon smiled for the tiny black box.

The fun wasn’t over, not with a ride down Windy Hill. We found our way, some riding, some walking, some falling down.

Where the trail goes is anyone’s guess tonight. “Head for that grove of trees. Watch out. There’s a barbed wire fence. Nancy, where are you?” Crash! Josh is down.

At the bottom of the hill on Portola Road we’re all accounted for. Once underway, we’re Flying Dutchmen speeding through the night, headed for home under the light of a romancing moon.

1986 moonlight riders from left in upper photo: Sterling McBride, Dave McLaughlin, Ray Hosler, Clay Riley, and Josh Klein. Nancy Laurents in lower photo.



Alpine Road-

It doesn't take a civil engineer to see what's happening with Alpine Road. This would happen to any road left unattended.

It's sad because the road has been a part of the area's history since 1894, according to the hiking book *Peninsula Trails*. The road is shown on my 1937 auto map.

Who's responsible for the road (the 2.6-mile dirt section)? Technically, it's the county of San Mateo. In reality, it's the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (MROSD). However, the county has not officially turned over the road to MROSD, so it remains in limbo.

I contacted the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District in 2008 to try to get someone to maintain the road and return it to its former glory, without success.

While cyclists still use Alpine Road, it's mostly mountain bikers. We used to ride our road bikes up it nearly every weekend during the spring, summer, and fall. It turns into a quagmire in spots after a heavy rain.

So what happened to Alpine Road? Well, it's right on the

San Andreas Fault, which does not help matters. Still, the biggest problem with the road is lack of maintenance.

The county failed to clean culverts and that is a death sentence for a dirt road built on a canyon wall. This was around the early to mid-1980s, at a time when San Mateo County was paving every dirt road in sight. The last time the road was graded was 1989. It was a lousy job at that, and the culverts were not cleared.

No doubt the county would have paved Alpine Road, but it had been closed to public access for a couple of decades when it went on its paving campaign. There would have been public opposition to paving and opening the road., mostly because the lower paved Alpine Road is extremely narrow. The county had no compelling reason to reopen the road, so they left it as is.

In the meantime, the road started experiencing frequent washouts. Jobst and friends spent weekends working on the road, even installing a culvert, but it was a lost cause. Heavy equipment was needed.



Best of times. Spring 1990 on Alpine Road, as riders stop to fix a flat.

- We Miss You

Finally, in 1995 a huge landslide wiped out several hundred yards of road, a direct result of plugged culverts. MROSD built a steep side trail that's impossible for most road riders to pedal up without dismounting.

Other parts of the road are eroding and more washouts are on the way. The road has also become much narrower as vegetation encroaches and the road crumbles.

ROAD STILL VALUABLE

Alpine Road should be maintained, but not just for cyclists. It's a potential fire escape route for local residents, and an access route for fire trucks. A grader could make short work of the road and restore it to its original grade.

For cyclists, Alpine Road is far and away the best route to Skyline Boulevard. It maintained a grade of between 5 and 8 percent before falling



Bullet-riddled San Mateo County road sign on Alpine Road.



Jobst inspects a huge slide in 1987.

into disrepair. The alternatives are the narrow Old La Honda Road, the steep Page Mill Road, and the busy Highway 84. Most motorists would favor seeing Alpine Road as a bike route to help relieve the heavy use on Old La Honda Road, and the same goes for Page Mill Road.

I feel privileged to have spent many Sunday mornings riding up Alpine Road. On a warm spring day the sound of birds singing under a canopy of oak, bay, and tan oak rejuvenated the soul. The burden of the daily grind gave way to friendly conversations riding uphill on a fine dirt road with splendid views of Santa Clara Valley below.

Other than maintenance on a culvert washout at the upper section of road in 2014, not much has happened with Alpine Road. MROSD talks about making improvements and it's in their vision plan, but will require San Mateo County approval.

Alpine Road Chronology

1894 - Road built, maintained by San Mateo County.

1975 - County closes road to public vehicles, installing gates at both ends (Alpine Road where pavement ends and Page Mill Road).

1982 - Heavy winter rains create landslides. Repaired.

1986 - Washout just beyond lower gate in creek bed. Washouts higher up.

1987 - Jobst and riders build a trail through landslide for easy riding. San Mateo County paving spree - Cloverdale, Old La Honda, Wurr, Lobitos Creek, Gazos Creek. Star Hill later.

1988 - Culvert installed by Jobst and Peter.

1989 - Road graded by San Mateo County in December. Lower bridge uncovered.

1995 - Huge landslide. MROSD designates steep side trail.

2008 - MROSD adds gravel to Mud Turn.

2014 - MROSD fixes washout half mile down from Page Mill Road at “free-way” section where bridge was located until washed out in 1965.

Il Buono.



Alpine Road after grading, January 1990

e il Bruto...



Washout on

Il Cattivo...



Hoofing it through Corte Madera Creek in 1987.



Alpine Road in 2008 keeps growing.



Plugged culvert in 2008.

Loma Prieta Puts Riders,



MAY 31, 1981

RIDERS: Jobst Brandt, Jim Westby, Tom Ritchey, Tom Holmes, Ray Hosler, Dan Green, Parker McComas

ROUTE: From Palo Alto, California: up Alpine Road, south on Skyline Boulevard to Summit Store; up Loma Prieta, down Mt. Umunhum, down Hicks Road through Los Gatos and home via Hwy 9. 80 miles.

WEATHER: Clear, hot

TIRE/MECHANICAL FAILURES: Ray-2 flats; Parker-2 flats and loose seat; Tom Holmes-2 flats; Jobst-jammed freewheel.

Besides the fact that Jobst hadn't traveled up Loma Prieta in more than a year, this trip was to be the test—or trial by fire—of the new Avocet freewheel being developed by Jobst. He decided to combine the two plans, which proved to be an ideal test for the new freewheel, because Loma Prieta is a tough ride with some hard climbing. Would the pawls hold up under the strain?

20

Jobst's freewheel is somewhat like the Shimano freewheel with a cassette body. It had a pawl design he saw in a Sturmey Archer hub that is no longer manufactured. Rather than using the traditional spring-activated pawl, Jobst's pawls are gravity-activated. They fall in and out of place as the hub turns on its axis. The test freewheel has 10 pawls, compared to a standard freewheel with four.

The intrepid engineer had no difficulty climbing Alpine Road. At the iron gate, Jobst stopped to search for a Hutton's Vireo he had observed on the previous week's ride. The bird had built a nest right above the gate in a large oak tree; however, there was no sign of the bird or nest.

At Page Mill and Skyline, Tom Ritchey, who had ridden from his home on Skyline a couple miles away, joined us. The ride along Skyline went without incident, as the riders discussed various topics this clear, warm morning. Tom said he wanted to head to the coast. Dan Green was going that way too, to visit friends in Santa Cruz. [They peeled off at Hwy 9.]

Jobst talked about next week's Corn Roast in Swanton and the impending ride on Last Chance Road. Jim showed how badly his recent cold had affected him by being dropped on one of the climbs. Several motorcycles buzzed by at high speed, one

Freewheels to the Test



of the riders leaning into a curve with his leg extended to one side. Jobst said that his technique serves no useful purpose; that became a subject of heated debate between Parker and Jobst. The rest of us had heard it all before.

At the fire station near Highway 9, we stopped for water at a fountain. Soon after stopping, two other cyclists came swooping in. The young riders were both known by Jobst, who had seen them racing tandems down Highway 9.

Jobst struck up a conversation with one of the riders, who said that recently he had raced down Bonny Doon—a steep, straight road leading to the coast—and noted that his tandem reached 75 mph. The

two young riders soon headed off on Skyline in search of dirt roads. Their conversation ended, we saddled up and headed off to the Skyline Boulevard summit and ensuing descent to Summit Road.

SHODDY SHOE WORK

On the climb up from Saratoga Gap, Jim was once again



Summit Road after the Loma Prieta earthquake, 1989.



Jim drinks from the Loma Prieta spring.

dropped. I had sore muscles from a previous day's run, so I slowed for Jim where the road leveled off. I coasted along peacefully, hands off the bars while eating a fig bar. Jobst and Parker were up ahead. I looked down at the road and noticed a white piece of plastic dead ahead. A thousand thoughts raced through my mind: "avoid the plastic, hands on the bars, stop eating, slow down, determine origin of plastic." With so many wheels in motion, I couldn't coordinate every motion fully. In a split second my tire ran over the plastic, followed by a loud hissing sound as my rear wheel swerved crazily. Flat!

.....

“With so many wheels in motion, I couldn't coordinate every movement properly. In a split second my tire ran over the plastic, followed by a loud hissing sound as my rear wheel swerved crazily. Flat!”

.....

I had one hand on the brakes by this point, and the fig bar fell to the pavement. I got the bike under control, but was going too slow to remove my foot from the toe clips before keeling over. I banged my elbow, and suffered a small cut.

In a few moments Jim was at my side asking me what happened. I fumed and cursed up a storm when I saw that I ran over a cleat. It didn't take long to see that it was an Adidas cleat, and I guessed that it had come off of Parker's shoe because he had been complaining about loose cleats! Jim found the cleat and tossed it off the road.

When Jobst and Parker realized what had happened, they returned to the scene of the accident and heard my story. Parker looked down at his shoe. "Yeah! That's my cleat! I thought I heard something hit the road back here but I couldn't figure out what it was." I cursed at Parker and Jobst joined in, telling him that the Adidas cleats were poorly designed. Parker yelled back that he was just buying what the people at Wheelsmith recommended. "This was supposed



Here's where the Loma Prieta spring water is stored, 2008.

to be the hot setup,” he said defensively.

I replaced my tube, and we were off again. We descended the long stretch to Hwy 17 at great speed, winding and twisting along Summit Road, which is barely wide enough for two cars. We passed apple orchards and Christmas tree farms, hilltop homes, and blackberry patches.

Once past Hwy 17, Summit Road traffic picks up. We rolled along to a lunch break at Summit Store, the traditional rest stop for all rides east and south of Hwy 17.

PEANUT GALLERY

After purchasing food and settling down outside, Jobst made his usual people observations. He went on about how the residents are not really country people, but Silicon Valley engineers who like to commute long distances to enjoy the countryside and keep their high-paying jobs. As usual, Jobst offered astute observations about the cars they drive and the clothes they wear. In between sage and pointed criticisms, Parker quizzed Jobst about what lay ahead.

Our group headed off, intent on reaching the summit by noon. The Summit Road climb past San Jose-Soquel Road left us gasping for air, as Tom and Jobst rode off the front. Just beyond the swamp, we stopped at the fire station and got water for our bottles, except for Jobst who never carries a water bottle.

The real climbing began on Mt. Bache Road, which rises steadily past mountaintop homes. We faced the biggest challenge on “One Mile Hill,” with a steady grade of 14-17 percent. At the summit the road turns to dirt, revealing the southern end of the Santa Clara Valley—mostly ranches.

THE DIRTY BUMP

More climbing ensued on the dirt road, as we passed the junction of Summit Road and kept left on Loma Prieta. The next hill



Jobst grabs a Pepsi on Loma Prieta Road, 2006.

is known as “The Dirty Bump,” a section of about 18 percent [paved now]. During the approach to the Dirty Bump disaster struck; Jobst’s freewheel made a sharp pop—the sound of metal snapping. While riding by his side, at first I thought it was a broken spoke, but Jobst quickly ascertained that it was the freewheel.

“Maybe one of the pawls broke,” I said. We struggled up the Dirty Bump and at the top passed a car with two youths who were firing a small-caliber rifle. From this plateau we saw a rugged set of hills and to our right and a radar tower once used by the Air Force.

At the iron gate, Jobst told me, “I’ve got a fixed gear now.” Whenever his rear wheel moved, so did his drive-train. Jobst would have to ride the rest of the way in fixed gear, down the steep and dangerous Mt. Umunhum Road and through the busy traffic of Santa Clara Valley. This did not worry him a bit, as he pedaled to the traditional watering hole a few hundred yards beyond the gate.

WATERING HOLE

Here Jobst, Tom, and I stopped for some badly needed water. At the



Tom, Jobst, and John McDonnell take in the view looking east on Mt. Umunhum summit, 1982.

roadside there's a concrete block where water issues from a copper pipe about an inch wide. We rested and took our fill of the sweet, cold water.

During a 20-minute rest stop, we made insightful observations about our surroundings. I pointed out a flycatcher. Jobst identified a wrenit by its peculiar loud sound. I then found two ants—one quite large and the other one tiny. Watching



Fixing a flat on Mt. Umunhum Road, 2006, below the concrete blockhouse.

their antics, I described a scenario for their doing battle. By this time Jim and Parker arrived and tanked up on spring water.

While waiting, I snapped several pictures with my Olympus XA. As I sat there, I found another interesting bug, this time a kind of wasp, regal in appearance. Jim looked at it and thought it was a drone ant, but that was quickly ruled out on closer observation. It was too big and it had a long neck with large, clear wings. It might have been an ichneumon fly. Its larvae are parasitic on the larvae of other insects. The riders also tossed around the idea that it was a space invader, in the guise of a bug. One never knows these days.

As Jim took in the sweeping vista of the mountains and Pacific Ocean in the distance, we spotted an Allen's hummingbird. "It's attacking me!" Jim exclaimed. Jobst speculated that it was attracted to Jim's bright orange jersey. "It wants you, Jim," Jobst said. After realizing Jim was not another hummingbird, the little guy buzzed off.

Rested, we headed to Mt. Umunhum. Immediately, Tom flatted. Despite Jobst having a fixed gear, he kept up with the group on the dirt. Then Tom flatted again. I had to go ahead and get one of Jobst's tubes because Tom was out. On my way back up the hill, I noticed a large junk yard full of wrecked cars, miles from civilization. After fixing Tom's flat, we quickly caught up with Parker, who had once again flatted in the front tire. This time, his seat had also come loose and he was cursing the Campy old-style double bolt. Tom waited while I rode ahead to find Jim and Jobst.

Back on pavement, we began the long, winding descent of



Mt. Umunhum has seen its share of fires. Here's how it looked in Spring 1986.

Mt. Umunhum, which usually has no traffic since it dead-ends at the top. [The road was also closed.] We came upon Jim and Jobst quickly enough; they were resting on the roadside, next to what looked like a mine entrance. Jobst crawled around inside and when he emerged declared, "There's a cold water spring in here."

We resumed the plunge down the mountain, Jobst managing to stay with our group most of the way despite the fixed gear. This predicament forced him to keep his rear brake on the entire way. When he got to the Hicks Road intersection,

he asked me for my water bottle. Jobst poured water on the front rim and said, "That rim is hot! I don't want to have a patch unglue on me."

We still had more steep road to negotiate, as Jobst told the others to meet him at the creek at the bottom. After a harrowing descent, we arrived at the creek and waited for Jobst. "Maybe he crashed back there," someone ventured. But no, Jobst was seen emerging from the bushes about 100 yards up the road, where there was apparently another creek. He rolled up and said with a gleam in his eyes, "When I put that tire in the water it didn't go 'hisssss' but it was just about hot enough to do that."

We continued to Los Gatos. Leaving a store, I yelled, "Oh no! I've got a flat tire!" I had to use Jim's spare tube. Once that was taken care of, we headed off through Los Gatos onto Saratoga-Los Gatos and home.

AFTERWORD: Jobst determined that a jammed pawl caused the freewheel failure. "Appalling," Jobst said. The freewheel never made it to market.

A trail to the Mt. Umunhum summit from the road below opens in 2017, but Loma Prieta Road remains closed indefinitely.



Over the years, public access to Mt. Umunhum has improved.





Haul

Road

Deep in the redwoods, following Pescadero Creek, there's a smooth dirt road with gently rolling hills — perfect for cycling.

MAY 13, 1984

RIDERS: Jobst Brandt, Olaf Brandt, Jim Westby, Peter Johnson, Ray Hosler, Jan Causey, Paul Mittelstadt, Bob Walmsley.

ROUTE: From Palo Alto, California: up Kings Mountain Road, down Purisima Creek Road, Hwy 1 to Stage Road to Pescadero, to Loma Mar, Wurr Road, through Memorial Park and Haul Road to Portola State Park; up Alpine Road, down Page Mill Road. 75 miles.

WEATHER: Warm, sunny and clear; some fog on the coast.

TIRE/MECHANICAL FAILURE: Jobst—front flat; Bob—flat

Word had gotten out that Jobst was still feeling the effects of a sore back, so a horde of riders showed up at his house. Little did they realize, even with a sore back, Jobst can maintain a withering pace up hills along the coast.



Purisima Creek Road in 1988 where the real climbing begins.

Peter is finally riding again after being absent since the Europe ride with Jobst last summer. Jim made a rare appearance. He had just finished working on the 1984-85 Palo Alto Bicycles catalog. Bob, who has also not been seen for many months,

was there, as was Paul, who was suffering from a cold. He graduates from Stanford in June. Olaf, Jobst's number two son, a sophomore in high school, came along. He has been riding more frequently and is getting stronger every ride.

Our group separated on Sand Hill Road when Walmsley flatted.

Jan and Olaf rode ahead. On Kings Mountain, Jim and I followed Bob and Paul. Jobst rode at a leisurely pace with Peter. Taking after his father, Olaf pushed a giant gear while climbing the steepest part of Kings Mountain near Skyline. I advised Olaf to shift into an easier

gear "or you'll ruin your knees."

At Skyline, Paul turned south. The rest of the group headed north to Purisima Road, an old logging road. Now it's a favorite place for mountain bikers, hikers, and equestrians.



Stage Road looking north from the first summit after leaving Pescadero.

Soon the land around the road will belong to the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District. Bob headed north when we reached Purisima, having ridden it last week.

The road was in much better condition than last year when it was dusty. We quickly made our way down the thickly forested canyon following the narrow, bumpy dirt road. At the culvert crossing on Purisima Creek, we stopped for water. I commented how different the place looked since I took a photo of Jobst getting a drink here two years ago. Several large trees grew where before there had been open space. Of course, the flooding from recent severe winter storms had changed much of the terrain.

Soon we encountered large mud holes. There was no way around so we rode through and got our bikes and our clothes muddy. At the bottom of Purisima Creek, we put our bikes over the yellow roadblock and washed the mud off in the creek. Jan removed her shoes and went wading.

Refreshed, we headed west on Purisima Road through a quiet glen marked by the occasional farm house and secluded estates. With the wind at our backs, maintaining a speed of 17 mph required little effort. I asked Olaf how fast we were riding. Olaf was using a new cyclometer made by Avocet, the mechanical components which had been designed by his father.

SAN GREGORIO

In San Gregorio, we stopped for food and drink at the town's only store. A half-dozen riders were already there. When we entered the store, we felt a blast of cool air from an overhead fan.

Jim and Jan headed up Hwy 84, leaving Jobst, Peter, Olaf, and me to continue on Stage Road to Pescadero. While climbing Stage Road, we were passed by a truck carrying a prize bull. Jobst commented, "How would you like to take your cow for a Sunday ride?"

On the final descent to Pescadero, Jobst said mockingly, "I'm confused about my direction. It happens every time I pass this place." He was referring to a strange building in the middle of a hay field, which is used for magnetic studies by the U.S. Geological Survey. [Apple and Tandy actually]

We continued past Willowside Farm, a former dairy, where peacocks and horses reside. Giant eucalyptus line the road and form an impressive canopy. Today we enjoyed a view of purple-flowered wild radish.



Tarwater tree is a short ride from the Haul Road.



Butano Ridge Trail in 1984. From left: Bill Robertson, Dave Porter, Dave Prion, Sterling McBride, Bob Walmsley, Rod Kendrick, Tom Ritchey, Brian Brause, John Woodfill, Karl Krumme; seated: Dave McLaughlin, Jim Westby, Jobst Brandt.

In Pescadero, our group turned left on North Street and headed east to Pescadero Road, bypassing the “downtown.” Rather than stopping in Pescadero, we continued on for seven miles and took a break in Loma Mar, which has one tiny country store right off the road. It’s also the town Post Office.

While taking a break, Jobst got into a discussion about Corvairs with a man polishing his Datsun 280Z. He said his father owned Corvairs in the 1960s when

they were made by Chevrolet. Jobst, although he spoke fondly of the car, said they were indeed death traps as consumer advocate Ralph Nader claimed. Jobst said the car’s suspension made it unsafe to drive.

Done eating, we headed onto the secluded Wurr Road in the redwoods for 1.5 miles to the Haul Road entrance. The smooth dirt road with gentle climbs parallels Pescadero Creek to Portola State Park and Hwy 9.

HAUL ROAD

At a tributary creek, Jobst stopped for water. A flood had obliterated the area two winters ago. We could still see signs of a natural disaster. It hardly seemed possible this trickle of a stream could have grown in size to uproot redwoods. After the floods, we rode here and had to portage our bikes over every creek crossing. It was easily the most miserable ride I ever had on



Iverson Cabin in 1988, shortly before it collapsed. Just off the Haul Road.

the Haul Road. The scene was one of devastation, with logs everywhere and the road a muddy mess. This was no doubt the low point of the Haul Road. Things have improved greatly since then. The Honor Camp “prisoners” used to work on the road, but the camp was closed in 2003.

We followed the freshly packed Haul Road in isolation. People rarely venture onto the remote road. In the 1940s-50s, a steam engine hauled logs to a sawmill at Waterman Gap near Highway 9. Jobst said the constant logging and truck traffic turned the road

into a smooth highway, so fast that he could ride effortlessly in an 85-inch gear at more than 25

mph. After logging stopped, the road fell into disrepair until the state finally took over maintenance.

At the back of Portola State Park, we turned left at an open gate and headed down a steep hill and passed the ranger house. The historic Iverson Cabin stood next to the ranger house. We turned left and rode over a wood bridge spanning Pescadero Creek, next to the park maintenance yard. [The bridge was finally replaced in 2010.] Jobst looked for trout in the creek, but saw only fingerlings. “There were big trout here 20 years ago,” he complained. “They got fished out.”

Olaf said he was tired, not a good thing when you’re in Portola State Park! The climb is brutal, with long sections of 16-18 percent to Alpine Road. From there it’s another three miles of climbing to Skyline Boulevard.

Olaf made it home. We enjoyed a cooling breeze, puffy white clouds, and views of the Pacific Ocean and Mindego Hill on the way to Palo Alto.

(Pescadero Creek below the Bailey bridge on Bridge Trail in 1987, a short distance from the Haul Road. Ted Mock photo)



Old Pescadero Creek bridge in the 1980s. Portola State Park.



New Pescadero Creek bridge, 2010. Haul Road access.

Memories Never Age



Ray Hosler in his youth.

The headline says it all. While I've aged and these rides are but a memory, they will not be forgotten. I produced this magazine to share the memories with fellow riders.

What I have forgotten—thankfully—is the pain: The pain of chasing riders who were much stronger. Fortunately, they waited.

As I look back on the rides, I'm reminded that we rode in some remote places. We

were just out for a bike ride though. All we left behind were tracks.

The outdoors should be shared as much as possible. Public support for open space confirms that notion is universal. Yes, we need rules, but let's do our best to let people play and get healthy exercise. We face an epidemic of poor health from sedentary living.

I hope by sharing these memories, others will follow and take up cycling!

Ray Hosler, January 2017

***This magazine is dedicated to Jobst Brandt,
Jan. 14, 1935 - May 5, 2015.***



Climbing Tunitas Creek Road on a beautiful August day.