

# My Cycling Habit

**By: Cloe Medusa**

Early morning: 6:45am. I'm presently attending to the ground-hog-day like version of my daily science project: dissolving glue. That would be the glue that prevents my eyelids from parting so that I can see things like door-jams, stairs and my cat "Jiggy". My properly outfitted and prepared laboratory (well, actually, my kitchen) includes a coffee maker with a clock so that I can set the automatic start time; is it just me or does it seem wrong that I need to set an "automatic" coffee maker? – I set it to "automatically" begin brewing at 6:30am.

My left shoulder along with my right wrist, left foot and right calf have been sore for, oh I don't know, a long time; ever since I moved into this house. Shall I explain? The alarm clock rings at 6:45am and I respond to that clear and present danger with a shock and awe campaign that would garner the respect of one General H. Norman Schwarzkopf, flailing away with my right hand in an attempt to overwhelm the alarm clock with lethal force which normally results in my having smacked the snooze button with my wrist, which hurts but accomplishes the desired result. Steel-on-target, that's my motto. In the world that is my home, I am the sole Super Power.

Navigationally impaired, due to the previously mentioned "glue" in my eyes, I head for the laboratory and (almost without fail on a daily basis) strike a glancing blow to the door jam with my left shoulder, not a direct hit, but the cumulative effect over a few years is noticeable. I keep my feet plodding along and plod upon the aforementioned Jiggy with my left foot. Jiggy reacts naturally, lets out her version of a war-hoop and attacks the only thing she can reach from that position: my right calf.

Fortunately, there are no stairs between my bed and the laboratory.

The smell of Peete's Hazelnut blend wafts its way into my sensory receptors and causes me to make my first conscious and voluntary action of the day – I raise an eyebrow, just one...the right one - it's way too early to make a two eyebrow effort.

I pour a large soup-bowl sized coffee cup of Peete's and plop down into my chair near the full length glass window that looks out over the lush greenery in my back yard. I notice that birds are singing but I can't see them; I don't even care, but Jiggy does, and she's asking to go out. I don't even like birds that much, so I built a combination bird feeder/Jiggy feeder. It's a 12 foot tall bird feeder that I shortened to about a foot and a half; it's Jiggy's favorite.

My face is hovering just a few inches over my cup. I use the warm steam rising off the hot coffee to melt away the glue that is the cause of my navigational impairment. I trade sips and eyelid steaming until my vision returns, then return to the "automatic" coffee maker for a second cup...errr...bowl full to accompany my breakfast of fiber-wholegrain-blueberry flakes and some skim milk along with a cinnamon blueberry bagel. These give me the energy reserve I will need over the next two hours as I go cycling.

Cycling: a recreational sport? I think not, in fact, to me it's neither recreation nor sport. I've been in the saddle for the better part of seventeen years now (I should add sore bum to my list of sore body parts) and have evolved as a cyclist. I like to ride with groups...alone. I like to ride alone...in a group. I like to ride alone...alone. Sometimes, I just don't want to be alone...so I ride. Other times I just need to get away by myself...so I ride.

Summer in Sacramento, 7:30am, 86° Fahrenheit: I put Joe Blow to work and add a few extra pounds of pressure to my tires and remember, this time, to put my water bottle in its cage. Something doesn't seem right, however, and with further inspection I realize there is no water in the bottle; so I fill it.

I hit the reset button on my cycle computer, roll out of the driveway and take the back roads to William Land Park where I leave the city streets and gain the entrance to the American River Parkway trail. I'm a slow warm up so I tend to cling to the right edge of the trail so that other, faster moving, cyclists can easily get by. It's nice to be able to get out early in the morning before the heat of the day comes on in earnest; it is expected to peak later today at 107°.

I ride along, my mind wandering down the path of my life, considering each junction and the choices I've made, or not made, or must make. I continue to wander as the American River Parkway trail meanders, each rise, each turn and each fall of the trail jogging yet another connection in my mind that represents a person, a place or an event. I don't know my pace, but it has been building over the hour that I have been riding. I don't know my heart rate either, but it has been doing the same. The only tangible evidence, to me anyway, is that I am now clinging toward the centerline and rolling past those riders who earlier had passed me by.

"On your left", I bellow toward another cyclist as I close in on him and prepare to pass, moving halfway across the oncoming lane to provide a safe buffer between us. I easily slide on by and regain my position clinging to the centerline. That's when the SOB hits the gas and makes a move to pass on my right, the annoying "ratchety-clack-spronging" sound of poor shifting filling the airwaves as he accelerates too rapidly from way too low of a gear. What the ^%#^%\$ is this bonehead doing?

The ZEN of riding has been pierced and is now bleeding all over my Trek. Not that I ever wash my bike, but I don't like the look of dried ZEN splashed all over my top tube.

Bonehead "Y" is now gloating to himself that he was able to "attack" ZEN Girl "X". Y is now in the red zone with his heart rate, but doing a good job pretending he's not. I'm still a little out-of-sorts and grumble to myself because this scenario is a pet-peeve of mine. It takes me a few minutes of negative grumbling (to myself) before I eventually forget all about Y and am back to enjoying my ride and working through the "connections" in my life.

Approaching the foot bridge just beyond the Rainbow Bridge in Folsom. Y, although still ahead, is being steadily reeled in...my ZEN-full state is returning, actually, perhaps even turning karmic.

The climbing begins with Y downshifting; I think he's cracking! I'm a few bike-lengths behind and can hear the winds of Moriah blowing from all the way back here; I do love the smell of Cytomax in the morning and it's now obvious that he is definitely sucking air big-time with his shoulders bobbing and chest heaving.

Suddenly, Y is riding with that "head turned to an angle" position so that he can see if I'm coming without actually looking at me; oh yeah, I'm coming...like a freight train on straight steel rails, and you're on my tracks. In the words of the rock band HEART: "...comin' straight on for you!"

He's falling back fast now and this time I don't bother to pay respects with an "On your left" warning. I move by quickly, accelerate, and maintain the blistering pace over the crest of the climb.

The route is an out-and-back one so I get to pass Y again; this time he's still grinding away up the hill as I'm making my descent. I look at him without expression; he fiddles with his water bottle and avoids eye contact altogether.

As I retrace my route along the American River trail and begin my ride back to Sacramento I realize that this is why I cycle; to expose the irritations in my life and then put them behind me.