

Early Christmas Present Ride-Salute to Sheehan

By Rob Verfurth

December 24, 2008

Participants: Dave Sheehan, Dave Voris, Mike Hodges, Jeff Cresap, Jim Broder, Dave Guidotti and Rob Verfurth

Start/Finish: Spring Meadow Road

Weather: high 40's/low 50's; increasing clouds—but no rain!

Distance and Elevation: 45 mile loop from Voris house, extra 10 miles to/from PQ with about 2,000 feet of elevation.

Route: Poway Road to Garden Road and up to Scripps Poway Parkway. Highway 67 to Dye Road loop and down Highland Valley Road; back down Pomerado to Poway Road for the return home.

Comments: Christmas came early for the Descenders. We posted a local group ride on the web site early in the week and then worried about predicted rain showers. Numerous alternatives were considered, including the recently opened Guido's Athletic Spin Pavilion (GASP), to get in a "ride" if the rains came as expected. Mike urged us not to be deterred and "suggested" we all show up at Voris's house at 8 am or he would come get us.

Fortunately the weatherman was wrong again and the day was perfect for a Descenders ride. I met Guido in PQ and we headed to pick up Voris and Mike on Spring Meadow. The second rendezvous point was the corner of Poway and Garden where we met up with Jim and then Dave Sheehan. The group headed up Sycamore Canyon and onto Scripps Poway Parkway when Jeff joined us. The 2 mile steady climb up to Route 67 was going great; a nice leisurely 9 mph pace with all of us in a tight group. Dave Voris was telling Christmas Angel stories. Things fell apart when Dave noted how pleasant it was that all of us could ride up together. That was all it took for Sheehan to take the bait and he pushed the pace splitting the group. I followed to catch him and then Jeff passed me, followed a few seconds later by Mike, Voris and finally Guido—everyone pushing to the summit.

I slowed to wait for Broder at the light and noticed that a small group of 4 riders made the turn north on Highway 67 just ahead of the boys. We regrouped and developed a nice pace up 67 past the light at the Poway grade when we blew by the 4 riders—DeWalt team members; four good female riders. We pushed onward around Mount Woodson and did not notice the four riders closing the gap we had on them. I did peak over my shoulder once to see where they were as we neared the top of the grade along 67 before the long descent/flat 3 mile section to Dye Road. They returned the favor and blew by us right at Archie Moore Road. We quickly regrouped and all 11 of us kept in a very quick pace

line of about 26-28 mph all the way to the light at Dye Road. Fortunately the ladies were heading down Highland Valley Road and we were going right along Dye. I thought the split of the big group would tone down the testosterone levels but the pace along Dye Road was unusually brisk. The group smoothly rotated all the way to the end of Dye Road and back to Highway 67 with surges from Mike to make sure we all felt the pain of the pace.

We did not slow our pace along Highland Valley but still managed to stay close together as we hit the peak, everyone ready for a fast descent. Sheehan, of course, pushed towards the front and led us through the tight turns. I sat at the back of the group on the flats just before Starvation Mountain and chuckled as the surge began again with the goal of being at the front of the last descent section. We all pulled fast along the bottom section and out onto Pomerado where Mike asked me if I was hurting. My answer was “Yes, as always”.

We stopped near the Country Club of Rancho Bernardo where golfers were out enjoying a winter round of links to take a group photo. We toasted Dave Sheehan who was celebrating this week the one year anniversary from his last surgery. Dave has made an amazing recovery from surgery on a tumor near his optic nerve, and never let the tumor slow him down. He is the founding member of the Descenders, an ever attacking rider and an inspiration to us all. Reflecting on how strong Dave is and all of us being fortunate enough to be out on our bikes made the early Xmas ride extra special.

We finished with an easy cruise to the light at RB Road as we split towards home. Dave Voris led the remaining riders down Pomerado with Guido offering a few pushes at the front until we hit Poway Road. Dave and Mike peeled off for home while Guido and I cruised up the PQ hill for a final leg burning finish to a great ride.

