

## Fifty Days: Enjoying the Ride

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The day after finishing this year's AIDS/LifeCycle, I was back on my bike. I rode just a few miles, but still I thought to myself: "Wow, I've been on my bicycle now for eight days in a row. I better take a rest!"

On that day, I did not foresee my summer of cycling ahead, nor the goals I would set for myself and ultimately surpass. Little did I know that eight days would soon be nothing!

Now, September is here. I'm happy to report summer cycling success on at least three fronts:

First, September 2 marked my 50<sup>th</sup> consecutive day of cycling, a streak that began July 15. That was the day after I returned from New York, where a very strong cyclist friend motivated me to push myself further. Initially I did not set out to ride 50 days in row. At first I thought I might ride 10, then it was 20, then I thought it might be nice to match my age, and finally, I arrived at the big half century mark. Granted, not all of those 50 days spanned great distances. In fact, none of them did! My shortest ride was 11 miles, and the longest was 71. Some days were fast and furious, while others were a welcome recovery.

Second, as the days accumulated, soon emerged a new goal for myself: I decided I would ride 1000 miles in the month of August. This stemmed from the fact I rode 940 miles in June, coming too close not to push ahead and pass the mark. Already riding every day, I did the math and realized I would need to ride just about 30-35 miles per day to reach this goal. Of course, challenges are relative, as a fellow cyclist in one of my clubs commented to me that 1000 miles in a month is... "really not all that much." Sure, to most elite riders, it's probably not. And perhaps one day soon, if I keep raising the bar, it won't be all that much to me either. But for now, for where I'm at in my cycling life, 1000 was a rabbit well worth not just chasing, but reaching and passing!

Third, I fulfilled another goal this summer, of participating in my first official, sanctioned cycling race. The Brentwood Grand Prix was held August 17. I finished this 16-mile race respectably, right in the middle of the pack. (*I've already written about this experience, in a blog entry posted August 18.*) This race came about for me largely through my time spent with several more seasoned and accomplished riders. In early July I rejoined the La Grange club rides,

recalling vividly how quickly all those cyclists left me in the dust two years ago. This time around, I was happy to find myself keeping up with most of them, as I now began making some new friends and realizing my comfort level in the racing world. I'm now looking forward to many more races to come!

Alas, my so-called "cryptic" Facebook updates can be explained!

For days, several online friends asked me about such postings as 655/1000/11 on 37.... 772/1000/8 on 40.... and finally, 1041/1000/0 on 48. So here's the simple breakdown:

It's based on my August mileage goal: 1000 miles. At one point I had cycled a total of 655 miles out of 1000, with 11 days in the month to go. Then a few days later I had cycled 772 miles out of 1000, with 8 days left in the month. As such, now you can figure out 1041/1000/0, where August wrapped up! As for that "on" number, it's unrelated to my 1000-mile journey. I threw it in as a bonus element, indicating my consecutive streak. "On 37" was my 37<sup>th</sup> consecutive cycling day since July 15, and so on.

In all, this has been a summer of mental discipline and physical challenge. Now autumn is upon us, and with upcoming travel and other pressing tasks at hand, I already know I will not be able to maintain this amount of cycling in the month of September. I'm happy to have taken advantage of the time while I knew I could.

My cycling will no doubt continue in a strong capacity, even as I don't ride 1000 miles in September or for another 50 consecutive days. In any event, I look forward... as often and as much as possible... whether recreating, racing or recovering... to enjoying the ride!