

Well, sometimes we get surprised. Today's ride was supposed to be an easy, enjoyable, unhurried ride. The route was a repeat of the route used for a training ride, and the pictures and narrative from the T-3 and T-2 Training ride log apply.

On this day, we have 2 companion riders – Evan Metcalf joins us on the ride, as does Bill Schoaff. We meet Bill at the Carson Nature Center, and after repairs to Judith's rear view mirror (that got knocked off coming out of the elevator), we ride up to REI. There we do some early hydration and apply sunscreen. From there we make a side trip to check on the status of the Freddy flyers – Lost Mascot and Nearly Lost Mascot. Two of the four that have been up at the bridge where we found Freddy's helmet are still up, the other two have been torn down. We had posted 4 flyers on the outside of 4 of the trash receptacles. All of the flyers had been removed by the workers who service the trash receptacles). Two flyers had been posted on the railings leading to the trail ramp up to REI. One of those is fully intact, and the second has the bottom half torn off. The bottom half has the phone number. However, still no phone call. Bummer.

Departing Confluence Park, we then start our journey along the Cherry Creek Trail. We meet up with Evan at the Cherry Creek Shopping Center Parking Garage, and after introductions, continue on to Cherry Creek State Park. The trail climbs the course of the creek (all uphill) from Confluence Park to the Cherry Creek Reservoir release and spillway. Ken makes the mistake of pushing too hard on this section of the ride, rather than taking it easy. We take a hydration stop at the Kennedy Park Baseball Fields. The Park is at the start of the descent to the tunnel under I-225. We talk about which route to take through the Park, as we have committed to be at Hess Road in Parker at 11:30 a.m., to meet up with the Browning Family, who has planned to stage an Aid Station for us on our ride. Bill – who has many years of experience with bike routes in the Denver area – recommends that rather than going southwest on the trail, climbing the dam and ending up at the southwest entrance to the park (E Union Ave – S Dayton St – W Lake Road), that we take the more challenging route of climbing the dam by taking the Cherry Creek trail section that heads northeast, crossing the Dam Road at S Vaughn Way and entering the park, to pick up the Parker Road Trail. After a bit, the Parker Road Trail turns into the Colorado Front Range Trail. When

that trail intersects with E Lake View Road, we turn onto the road and descend to the point where it intersects with the Cherry Creek Trail. Being back on familiar trail, we exit the Park, taking E Caley Ave west to S Jordan Road. Just past the intersection of S Jordan Road with E Blackhawk Way, the trail becomes a trail again, and we go down the long descent around the Jordan Road Electrical Substation.

Passing under E Arapahoe Road, we skirt the perimeter of the Cherry Creek Soccer Complex. By this time, the heat of the day is starting to make its presence known. We are lucky, in that several of the fields are being watered, and one of the sprinklers, aimed right over the trail, gives us a refreshing cold splash.

Staying on the trail, we pass under E Broncos Parkway, past Tagawa Gardens, to and through Cottonwood Park East and then under Cottonwood Drive. We then skirt a couple of neighborhoods, finally passing under E-470 and reaching the intersection of Cherry Creek Trail with what we have been calling the C-470 Trail, just after the 24.5 Mile Cherry Creek Trail mile marker. We stop at the intersection for hydration, as we always do when pedaling this route, and empty our water bottles. We are now about 4 miles from the Browning Family Aid Station, and it looks more and more like a godsend, their gift to us.

We continue on the Cherry Creek Trail, passing under Pine Lane, Lincoln Avenue, and Main Street, and on to the Cherry Creek Trailhead at McCabe Meadows. As we reach the McCabe Meadows Trailhead, we pass through a giant gathering of young people dressed to the 9's, celebrating a graduation. They are taking pictures across the trail, so we interrupt their photo shoot when it is in a lull, to get through. We are not alone in such interruptions, as there is steady cycle traffic, some of it composed of cyclists engaged in intense workouts and pushing their limits on energy and speed.

We are greeted by the Browning Family at the Aid Station – cheering, waving hands, jumping up and down!! And boy do we have a spread set up for us: Ice cold water, fig bars, chocolate chip cookies, astoundingly healthy miniature muffins, energy water, bananas, crunchy Kind bars, juice drinks, all supported by mask usage, social distancing, hand sanitizer, and paper towels. (We need to take a picture – this is

awesome!!). Instead, we just dig in, focused on getting electrolyte replacement drinks mixed first – and rapidly consumed, followed by feasting on the carbohydrate replacement items. Our collective need for fluids and sustenance in the forms of quick-access carbohydrates is so great that we all turn our attention to it immediately upon disembarking from our bicycles. We enjoy the Browning Family's gift and hospitality - including social interaction - for about an hour. The kids have found the perfect climbing tree, with bark that provides handholds that allow them to go up the side of the tree.

We will be forever grateful for Team Browning's support of our ride – it is safe to say that none of the four of us was going much farther in the absence of the rehydration and carbohydrate supplementation provided by this Family of Angels!!

Teddy wants to join Davis and Carter on the branch, while Amelia points to the natural sitting space on this huge, magnificent tree.



Then, with a close-up, we get a better sense of why this tree has such interest for smaller two-legged's – easy to get there, great view from ten feet above the ground, and newfound friends with whom to share this fun!!





We do manage to get a picture of the cycling group.



After a discussion among the members of the cycling group, we reach a consensus that we are not going to go down to the Hess Road intersection – about a mile away – but are turning around NOW and starting the journey home. From the perspective of the weather-watcher, this turns out to be a good decision, as a post-ride assessment reveals that we all arrived home before any rains graced our parched land.

The Aid Station has been an enormous gift to Judith and Ken, as we were really hitting our limits. Evan and Bill also indicate that they, too, were in significant need of a chance to recharge energy, electrolytes, and fluid. Following the R&R, it is a dramatically different ride back to the Cherry Creek Trail/C-470 trail intersection. (aided by the fact that we had been climbing all the way to McCabe Meadows, and reversing the route it was all pretty much downhill for 4 miles.)

At the trail intersection, Teddy discovers a Lost Little Girl with Blue Hair.



Teddy hugs and comforts her.



He is tempted to take her home – but that would be the same thing that happened to Freddy. So, Teddy leaves the girl so that the people who love her will have a chance to find her.



Evan separates from the group at the trail intersection and heads back north on Cherry Creek Trail, as it passes close to where he lives. Bill stays with us on the C-470 West Trail until the turn off for Colorado Blvd, as it is the most direct way to his house.

We continue on the pre-planned route to our home, stopping for ice cream at the Inside Scoop, of course.

The day has been educational, and we have been lucky with the weather. We continue watching cells all around us, with a smattering of raindrops actually making it to the ground; most seem to be evaporating in the dry air before hitting the ground. A few sprinkles occur as we are going north from McCabe Meadows Park. But no rain happens after that until we are eating our ice cream. As we finish our post-ride treat, the first roll of thunder is heard. We pedal home before any rain cell can get close enough to get us wet. The rain falls after we get home, much to the delight of the flowers in the planters.

All in all, this is a day that goes into our T-RAD book as one that has re-taught us some basic take-home messages:

(1) Remember that we (two-legged's) humans do NOT control the weather.

(2) Remember just how beautiful the natural world is – and how restoring it can be – AND how careful we must be, for the Laws of Nature do not change. (Dehydration can range from uncomfortable → fatal in a very short period of time. Pay attention!!)

(3) Be grateful for acts of love – and use any opportunity to share love and pay it forward.

We are grateful to have shared this day with Evan and Bill. We have been blessed by Team Browning (Carter, Davis, Amelia and Sarah). Thank you, All!

See you next week –

Ken and Judith

Is anyone interested in joining us for next Thursday's adventure? We will be exploring Golden CO on July 2, 2020.