



# TOO COOL TO BURN

"THIRTY YEARS AGO, BEFORE ATHLETES AND COMPETITION AND 'PERFORMANCE', WHEN MOUNTAIN BIKING WAS STILL A HIPPIE PASTIME, IT WAS QUITE NORMAL TO PASS A JOINT AROUND ON A RIDE"

**O**h boy, these Fairfax cats really crack me up: their unicorn car bonnets, their hydroponics, and the zombie health fanatics stocking up on beans, greens and tangerines in the organic market. It took three days, but I'd got the measure of the place.

"Do you guys burn?" asked Pat when we reached the top of the hill. Really? The thought of hot smoke filling my lungs on such a hot day turned my stomach. Never got the taste for it and wasn't likely to now, up here on top of the world, with a 40 minute climb behind us and the full potential of Tamarancho up ahead.

I watched as the younger guys in the group took turns to decline Pat's hospitality.

What a bunch of lightweights, he must have thought. How times change. Thirty years ago, before athletes and competition and 'performance', when mountain biking was still a hippy pastime, it was quite normal to pass a joint around on a ride. In the going on 20 years I've been riding, I'd never even seen it done before. What a square.

It was good to be out with some normal people – not industry, just riders. Well, for the most part. The ride had been arranged by Mark Baeder who runs guiding company Mountain Bike San Francisco ([mountainbikesf.com](http://mountainbikesf.com)), and who also leads tours in California for Sacred Rides. He'd given us some advice on Twitter and invited us to join him for a ride.





Mark was accompanied by his buddy Niall, a dour Englishman who's been living in Fairfax long enough to set up a successful audiovisual installation business but not so long as to lose his British sense of humour. It was good to meet another Brit, and we talked about the differences between home and California. Niall doesn't believe he'd be running his own business if he'd stayed at in England. "People have more disposable income here. A lot of my friends are small business owners. I don't know anyone at home doing that. There's something in the air here."

Charlie Kelly hadn't been able to make it, and so had volunteered Pat to join us on our ride. Even though Mark and Niall live right there in Fairfax, Pat had a new route for them to the top of the hill. These old timers always bring something to the table.

Once Pat left us, we retraced the tyre tracks from our ride with Kitsbow, winding through the forest to the new Flow Trail. The trail was built in just three and a bit months, entirely by

volunteers – an impressive amount of earth moving. Halfway down we encountered Davey Simon. Davey is one of the key people who, via Facebook, helped corral disparate groups of riders to form one big digging machine. As we stand trailside, shooting the breeze and watching the berms get a volunteer watering, a constant stream of Friday afternoon traffic flows down the hill. If ever a trail was appreciated, it is this one.

We left Davey with the promise that we'd buy him a beer in the Gestalt Haus if he caught us up in town. It took him half an hour to take us up on the offer, and we spent time reflecting on bad lines and good times in what was rapidly becoming my favourite ever bar.

One thing was becoming clear: we needed to get the hell out of Fairfax before, like a Venus flytrap, it ensnared us so much it wouldn't let us leave. Next stop, Novato, then north, away from Marin once and for all.







[Left] We met Davey Simon (left) maintaining the trail

[Below] The bike parking inside the Gestalt Haus

