

Cycling Lamorinda

By Cathy Dausman



Cyclists gather for the ladies' no-drop ride through Lamorinda.

Photos Cathy Dausman

I am a lifelong cyclist, contentedly stuck at a recreational level. While I've managed some hills in Marin County, ridden to California beaches, coasted the flatlands in central Oregon and slogged through swampy summer weather in the mid-Atlantic states, I mostly frequent the Lafayette-Moraga Regional Trail, which means I'm coasting fully half my trip.

So when I spotted a social media post promoting a ladies' no-drop ride, I was in — if only for the bragging rights. Cycling pants and jersey? Check. Multi-speed bike? Check. Helmet and fingerless gloves? Of course! Is there extra credit for having flashing safety lights and double water bottle cages?

Kelly Lack turned out on a recent sunny but mild Saturday morning at Moraga Commons Park to lead our pack of eight. I opted out of an earlier ride when temperatures hovered near 100. "This is the sport moms take up when they

want to return to an exercise routine," post-children, Lack said. My children are grown; I was definitely an anomaly.

Lack cautioned us to ride single file and pushed off for Orinda. Moraga Way looks flat, but my legs told me otherwise. Switching to a lower gear, I got into a routine — gasp, gasp, stroke; gasp, gasp, stroke.

"Eight miles an hour!" the sweep called out happily.

"You're riding an electric bike," I wanted to snarl.

Lack circled back to check on me. She makes this ride regularly, cycling in to Orinda BART to start her work commute. The group promised if I made it to Hall Drive, the road would flatten out, and at last it did. Gearing up for the downhill portion my rhythm switched to an enjoyable stroke, stroke, breathe. At Theatre Square I took stock of the competition by asking how many gears each bike had.

Some riders seemed not to know. Maybe they didn't want to hurt my feelings; my Fuji has a measly seven gears. An all-too-brief rest, and we headed east to Lafayette along roads bordering Highway 24. Sweeping under the highway we headed into town, single file, on Mt. Diablo Boulevard. Thankfully my worst fear — not about running out of steam, but of running into a parked car — didn't materialize.

We stopped a second time to count noses at Lafayette Plaza Park. All of me was still "here," if slightly winded. The Lafayette-Moraga trail beckoned; I heard its siren call even when the others dutifully pushed on to Pleasant Hill and Olympic Boulevard.

I cut the corner, grabbed an all-too-short rest and saddled up again when the others flew past. We were on the final leg (some more literally than others) of an 18-mile loop, closing in on our Moraga Commons destination.

I shared with Lack my love of the wind in your face feeling and worry-free exhilaration that comes with cycling, and even compared war wounds. Mine I earned coasting downhill years ago; Lack got hers from cycling a Peter Sagan Fondo dirt ride.

Our group rode an easy 18 miles in 90 minutes. It's farther, and faster, than I usually ride by half again. But I'd do it over — both the gasp, gasp, stroke and the stroke, stroke breathe portions — in a heartbeat if they'll have me.

Especially if I'm allowed to cut corners.

Campana Music closing its doors

By John T. Miller



Joe Renwick, left, son of former manager Ben Renwick and an expert in instrument repair, poses with current manager John Kreis in front of what was once the largest inventory of sheet music in the Bay Area. On the wall behind them is a photo of founding owner Joe Campana. Photo John T. Miller

After 71 years doing business in Lafayette, Campana Music will be closing its doors for good later this month.

The last official day for the store will be Aug. 16, but it will host a celebration commemorating their seven decades of serving the area on Friday, Aug. 17, from 3 to 6 p.m. The store will also have one last blowout sale at that time.

The Campana family continues to own the building and the surrounding properties and is undecided about whether they will look for a new tenant or consider selling, according to current store manager John Kreis.

For Kreis, the closing will represent more than just the end of 28 years working for the Campanas. "Although I don't have the same last name, I look at them as family," he says. "I've known them since I was 3 years old."

Kreis's mother, Gretchen Givens, was an avid piano player and visited the store often. The two families became close, watching Raiders games together along with other activities. Givens gave piano lessons through the shop for 26 years.

After Kreis lost his father when he was 17, Joe Campana took him in and became like a second father to him. "He was one of the best people I met in my life. Joe helped me through a rough time and then hired me when I was 20 years old."

Campana moved from Oakland and opened the store in 1947 across Mt. Diablo Boulevard. When it burned down, he built the store on its current location in 1968.

Kreis relates that for many years, Campana would get to work at 6 a.m., give lessons until the store opened at 9 o'clock, then after closing at 6 p.m. would give lessons until 10 p.m., six days a week.

"He showed me the ropes and I got my work ethic from him," says Kreis, bragging that he'd taken only two days of sick leave in his 28 years and very few vacation days, "which were unpaid."

At the height of its business, Campana Music gave lessons, music rentals, sales of musical instruments and accessories, repairs, and boasted the largest inventory of sheet music in the Bay Area. At one point they also sold TVs and VCRs. Up to 8-10 teachers worked in the eight studios.

Campana worked until the day before he passed away seven years ago. Ben Renwick, a talented baritone saxophone player who gave lessons at the studio, took over as manager. When he retired last October, Kreis then stepped into the role.

Another key employee is Ben's son, Joe Renwick, who had worked on and off at the store since he was 12 years old. When Ben Renwick took over, he talked his son into attending trade school in Red Wing, Minnesota, where he learned the art

of instrument repair.

Like so many other small businesses, online competition is the main factor forcing them out. Kreis says, "We buy stuff for the price that online businesses can sell it for."

After giving so much of his adult life to Campana Music, Kreis plans on taking a few months off for a breather and then either go back into the music business or look into the wine industry, another interest of his.

Meanwhile, after repairing musical instruments for six years, Joe Renwick is finishing the electrical engineering program at Diablo Valley College and plans to transfer to a University of California school.

Studio L, which uses the upstairs portion of the building for music and performance instruction, will continue to do business there for now.

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