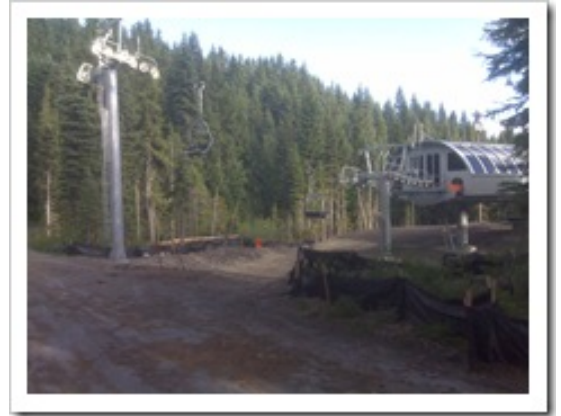


## A Little Adventure on Mt. Hood

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The OBRA Uphill Time Trial Championship is coming, and I'm in charge of putting it together. I finally got the *good* route lined up for this year's event. Last year, they were building a new chair lift, and everything was blocked with heavy equipment. The year prior, there was a logging operation, making the road impassable. Not this year - everything was set to go, or so I led myself to believe.



Last week, I got an email regarding the course:

Hi folks--have just ridden the old Timberline road last Sunday (8/3), and it is passable by bike only if you dismount and climb over snowdrifts approx eight times on the climb. There's also one or two fallen trees to negotiate, and a LOT of debris on the road leftover from winter windfall. It is unlikely the snow will melt by the TT date. Any plans to plow or to choose an alternate route (e.g. the main Timberline road)?

What?!? Crap! This was news to me.

Today, I intended to see what I could do to clear up the route. I threw my single speed 'cross bike in the car, along with a backpack, shovel, bow saw, and some extra clothing, and drove towards Government Camp (on Mt. Hood).

Just past Zig Zag, I came upon the biggest traffic jam I'd ever seen. Have you ever seen that commercial where traffic is totally stopped, and people are barbecuing on the highway? It was like that. Kids running around everywhere, even on top of motor homes. Clearly, nothing was moving.



I had no idea how far up Government Camp was, but due to a late start, I didn't exactly have time to wait. I parked the car on the side of the road, pulled out the bike, put on the backpack and rode up the hill.

I don't know how far it was up to Government camp, but it was not a super easy ride, especially on

my single speed. Furthermore, I did not plan on doing much continuous riding, so I did not wear cycling clothing. Did you know heavy "cargo shorts" with boxers underneath are not nearly as comfortable to ride in as lycra bike shorts? Yes, it is true.

I rode past countless cars, towards the obstruction. A Life Flight helicopter flew away over my head as I approached. Bad news. I caught a glimpse of a really mangled Subaru, with a lot of rescue personnel running around. I just looked straight ahead, riding through the grass to get around a large fire truck parked sideways across the road. I didn't want to see anything nasty, and I didn't want anyone injured to see me gawking at them. Personally, I'd hate that.

The rest of the ride up Mt. Hood Hwy. was against another endless stream of cars. As I rode up, it seemed the driver of every 10 cars would yell at me and ask *Hey...what happened down there?* At first I stopped a few times and mentioned I didn't really look, nor did I know when they'd be able to get through. That got real old after about ten times, though. Finally, I just said *"half mile down the road, they're cleaning it up."* Of course, that *half mile* turned to *one mile*, then mile and a half, two miles...and then the turn off for Government camp came to view. I was very pleased to get off that road!

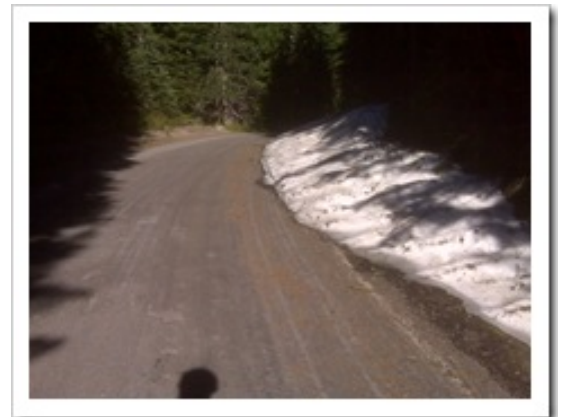
I finally arrived at the start of the Uphill TT route, well drenched in sweat and feeling rather warm. I took out my phone and snapped a picture of the first stretch of road, which looked great. I mounted my bike, and headed up the hill, ready to dig snow or cut tree limbs.



At first, as I climbed, every turn was a victory. *Yeah! No blockage here!* I kept going, and soon I was just riding the route, the sun casting a strange silhouette with helmet, backpack, and shovel handle rhythmically moving back and forth as I pushed up the hill. I love this road, and I started to enjoy the ride.

Then I began thinking about a book I'm reading my kids, *The Rider*. In this book, Krabbe writes numerous times of climbing a mountain pass in a 43x19, pushing a little, but feeling strong.

I'm in a 42x20, and I don't feel that strong. Maybe Krabbe wasn't wearing boxers and a backpack with tools in it, but I was starting to feel troubled. Krabbe wasn't a pro, just a fast, respectable amateur racer. Not unlike myself, or so I believed as I read his book. I began to doubt myself. Maybe Krabbe was just really small and skinny. Nah. Maybe he stretched the truth. It is fiction, after all. Nah. When you're having a good ride (especially a race), you can push bigger gears. That's what happened. He was on fire that day in the Cols of Aigoual. I was just riding my bike, looking for snow to shovel.



Pushing on, just past the half way point, I'd not encountered any major problems in the road. This is fantastic. A mile further, I passed a few mt. bikers. One guy decided to ride with me, and we start talking as we climb. I explained why I had a shovel poking out of my backpack, and he joined me in my search for road obstacles.

We didn't find any, and finally reached the top of the climb, entering Timberline road. No snow drifts, no fallen trees, but one very happy guy. My new friend and I decided to get out some warmer clothes for the decent. He pulled a jacket from the netting of his Camelback, while I threw my backpack on the ground, tossed out a bow saw to get to a vest, and then repacked everything.



I rode down the same route I came up, just to check everything again. If I missed a patch of gravel or snow while grinding up the hill, I'd certainly catch it while flying down. Alas, there was nothing worth mention.

I returned to Government Camp to see traffic had started moving, albeit slowly. I rode down Mt. Hood Highway, again passing countless cars towards my parking spot on the side of the road. Even though I rode an extra 10 miles or more, I'm pretty sure I still got done faster than if I'd waited in that traffic jam.

In the end, I had a nice little adventure on Mt. Hood with a very happy ending. I stopped by Dairy Queen on the way home to celebrate. Thin Mint blizzard? Don't mind if I do. I bet Krabbe never ate Dairy Queen.