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## Mark's Bench in Whiting Ranch

If you ride Whiting Ranch Wilderness Park in Orange County, be sure to go to the top of Dreaded Hill. There you will find a beautiful hand crafted, split log cedar bench overlooking the valley and hills to the north and communities and ocean to the west. In the center of the backrest a bronze plaque reads: "Mark J. Reynolds, 1968-2004, He was doing what he loved."

You might remember the story of how Mark died on January 8, 2004, when he was attacked by a 112 pound mountain lion while fixing a broken chain during a ride at Whiting Ranch. You may also remember that later that day the cougar attacked again, taking Anne Hjelle clean off her bike.

Fortunately, Anne was riding with good friends who were able to save her! Mark's death was only the 6th by a cougar in 114 years in California, and was the first ever recorded in Orange County. Anne's attack and escape was one of the most remarkable stories of wilderness survival most people have ever heard. Whiting Ranch Wilderness Park just reopened after being closed due to mountain lion activity!



After many years of maintenance, it was determined late in 2019 that it would be better to replace Mark's Bench than continue to try and maintain the rotted bench. A few thinkMTB Club members have been maintaining it for about the last 4 years, and it was removed and totally "refurbished" in 2018. At that time, it was noticed that the inside of the bench was almost completely rotted, due to intrusion of rain water that didn't have a place to exit. It was filled with Bondo and then sanded and coated with lacquer, but it was on it's last legs even after that.

So, we (Park Rangers and thinkMTB) removed Mark's Bench early in 2020 to allow removal of the plaques and installation of them into the new bench. At that time, the old rotted log supports were removed as well. The bench is being totally replaced it with a new tree/bench, with stainless steel supports which should last much longer.

Unfortunately, the COVID pandemic has put a halt to all park ranger and volunteer joint activities. As SOON as we get the OK from OC Parks, we will install the new one. That will involve digging the holes for the new metal support posts, concreting them in place, then once dry, bringing up the bench and installing it on the supports. SHARE is helping in the financial aspects of this restoration!

A place to sit and rest at the top of Dreaded will be coming "soon" we hope.

## SHARE Stands in Solidarity With BLM

SHARE mountain bike club stands in solidarity with the African American community and is committed to building a more inclusive and diverse outdoor community here in Orange County. We were shocked and sickened by the senseless killing of George Floyd and others. We support the **peaceful** protests being held throughout the world including cities throughout Orange County. SHARE as an organization is discussing how we can be better and do more.

- What can our club do to make sure Black Lives Matter?
- How can we make sure Black people can thrive in our outdoor community?
- Can SHARE help make the outdoors a place where Black people are welcome, inspired, educated, and nurtured?

For mountain bike and trail maintenance organizations such as SHARE, how do we make Black people feel welcome on the backcountry trails, when riding a mountain bike, and at our trail work events?

How can we do this?

Please email us with your ideas.

## Steve Larson

President

SHARE Mountain Bike Club of Orange County

## Membership



**There is still time to** join or renew your membership to be entered to win one of sixteen different prize packages. Join or renew in June!

### How do your membership dues help?

- Fund trail work projects throughout Orange County
- Plan community events that are fun for the whole family! Including the SHARE poker ride and Take a Kid Mountain Biking.
- Provide training for new volunteers to lead trail work days and reward all volunteers with food and beverages after a day working on the trail

## Join or Renew Here

•Here is a link to Junes's meeting minutes: [June minutes](#).

Our next meeting is Monday 08/03/2020 at TBD



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