**Sycamore Cove Beach Party**

The Conejo Ski and Sports Club has an Annual Sycamore Cove Beach Party. The past-president, Richard Murray, has run this party for the last 8 years. Chris and Louis signed up for this, but Louis had to drop Chris off at the LAX airport for a trip to Milwaukee on Saturday morning, September 22, 2018. Louis then drove up the Pacific Coast Highway to the location in Point Mugu State Park.

Leaving Santa Monica going west, I noticed hundreds of people on bicycles traveling in the same direction. There were several large pelotons that completely occupied the right lane of the two lane road and the cyclists continued on for miles until Zuma Beach State Park. I stayed in the left lane, but had to slow down substantially when passing the large groups, as some cyclists were occasionally forced out of the right lane into part of the left lane.

Although I arrived at Sycamore Cove at 8:30 AM for a 10:30 AM picnic start, the ski club organizers were already there and had reserved parking spaces along the beach as well as a group of 10 tables. I attempted to be useful and help carry the very large charcoal grill out to the beach. Error#1: The grill had wheels that needed the large socks to avoid getting sand in the wheel mechanism and keep the heavy grill from sinking into the sand. The grill had to be placed on a table, de-sanded, and socked.

A nice lady from another group was attempting to put up the volleyball net by herself, so I tried to help out. The net had to be perpendicular to the water to avoid wet balls and beach slope. Error#2: The poles on the net were thin; the ropes were thin; the stakes were ordinary. Despite our best efforts, the top of the net was curved by the down-beach wind, and when the net was hit with a ball or a person, the top ribbon sort of collapsed downward. Meanwhile, the experts from the ski club had shown up with a shovel, substantial volleyball poles/net, and large spring loaded ropes to tie everything down. The ropes were attached to the top of the poles and the middle, so the wind had no effect on the net. Volleyball play, however, was a different matter. For the upwind side, the ball would go too far and be blown away across the sand. For the downwind side, the players had difficulty getting the ball up and over the net. The group needed the solutions from our regular Tuesday night game at Playa Del Rey: 1. We use five balls so we do not spend too much time chasing balls instead of playing. 2. There are 2 inch wide heavy fabric straps fastened into the sand to denote the court boundaries.

The sun started to appear from behind the morning clouds, so I sprayed 50 SPF on the exposed parts of my skin and wore a bright orange (of course) wide-brim hat. Error#3: I did not get enough spray deployed on my nose and chin and ended up with some sun damage to the skin there.

People started arriving and placed umbrellas and the large expanding square tents into the sand near the shore line. There was limited shade from some old trees near the parking lot. The down-beach wind increased in velocity and soon there was the colorful sight of umbrellas and tents flying down the beach with several people in futile pursuit. Fortunately(?), there was a rock outcropping on the downwind side of the beach for the equipment to crash into. Later, several people were trying to engage in umbrella repairs. The club tents over the food were securely anchored and attached to each other. The wind discouraged the ski-club members from swim suits or going into the ocean.

Lunch was well-organized with fresh picked corn, mixed green salad, and a mixed fruit salad, all prepared with an assembly line on the spot. Potatoes, chicken and salmon were all charcoal grilled and served hot. Food showed up at the serving table at intervals, hot and ready. My attempt at eating the leafy salad was a failure. I could get it onto my fork, but before it reached my mouth, the leaves flew off onto my neighbor at the table. I just gave up on the green salad and was very happy with the fruit salad. Surprisingly, the chicken ran out, but there was leftover salmon and salads with pies for dessert.

I had a great time doing several things wrong, so I want to go back next year to see what the conditions are like; it is almost certain not to rain. The club definitely has friendly members.