

To Maureen

Acknowledgements

A big THANK YOU to everyone who gave us food, lodging and kindness when we crossed Canada. From Newfoundland: Denise and Terry in St. John's and Paige, Andrea and her parents in Pasadena. From Prince Edward Island (PEI): Joan and Bryson of Charlottetown. From Nova Scotia: Merrill and Al in Lunenburg. From Ontario: Edna and Bernie in Ottawa; Tante Gré in Kingston; Viv and Seb in Markham; Special thanks to Mary and Fred in Barrie for keeping us 10 days while we had the flu, Barb and Graham in Southampton. From Alberta: Jackie in Calgary. From BC: Jean and Dennis in Penticton, Sheila and Thomas in Delta, Nancy M. in Richmond for the use of her webspace and Auntie Marg in Victoria for letting us stay a week.

Thanks to travelling buddies Val and Alex for sharing our journey from Halifax to Digby and Linda and Terry for renting a 30-foot RV for one week between Banff and Kelowna. We loved hearing from everyone at home and new friends we met along the way. All the emails and phone conversations kept us from getting homesick. Thanks to the BC Randonneurs who rode out to meet us on our second last day.

A special thanks to Maureen's Mom, for storing all our stuff and taking care of our mail, Bruce's Mom, for keeping the cats. Thanks to all our friends and family who commented on this text and especially Lisa Kurki for her numerous corrections and suggestions.

Any errors are my own.

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Foreword

The events that led Maureen and me to sell our house, store our belongings, put jobs on hold, board the cats and go cycling were many years in the making and could be many hours in the telling. However, after the trip, most people didn't have time for our whole story, they just wanted to hear...

- Our cycling trip lasted 124 days between St. John's, Newfoundland, and Victoria, British Columbia. We spent 60 nights in campgrounds, stayed 37 nights at 30 different motels or B&B's and spent 27 nights with friends/family. We travelled 6208 km by bicycle, all but 120 km on pavement, and an unknown distance of nautical miles during 10 ferry passages. We arranged transport, for the bikes and ourselves, in 6 vehicles for an estimated total of 3,000 km. We rented 1 car for sightseeing.
- During our trip we had 7 flats, 2 wheel failures, wore out 3 tires and 2 sets of brake pads. We had 17 days of rain and 6 days of tail winds. We used 5 bottles of sunscreen, 4 litres of white gas and 1 bottle of bug spray. We lost a pot handle, a baseball cap, 3 coffee mugs, nail clippers and a Swiss Army knife. Maureen lost 10 pounds, while I gained 2.
- We sent 3 packages home, which included our winter clothing, books, binoculars, tripod, a pot, a bowl, a tarp, assorted maps and memorabilia, 1 gift souvenir, and 3 cassette tapes to accompany photos we had developed. We met up with our winter clothing in Calgary, Alberta.
- The best restaurant dinner was at Charlotte's Lane in Shelburne, Nova Scotia. The best breakfast was at Roper's Restaurant in Wawanesa, Manitoba. The best pastries are in Quèbec and the best-planned Provincial Parks are in Prince Edward Island.
- The worst road, other than construction zones, was the 85 km between Ogema and Assiniboia, Saskatchewan. The best road is the new pavement on Mt. Woodside in the Fraser Valley, British Columbia. Most scenic rides were

between Lunenburg and Mahone Bay, Nova Scotia; Kingston to Carrying Place in Ontario; and all of the Rockies.

- The best part was being together.

Those are the facts, and this is our story.

As early as 1997 the patterns of both our lives were changing. Eventually our new lives allowed us the freedom to take four months off cycling, but at the beginning of the change, our good luck was not readily apparent. For some people, having a nervous breakdown at work, or colliding with a car while on bike, doesn't have a lasting effect. However, both events changed our lives.

Chapter 1.

Time Off - Be careful what you wish for...

Spinal boards make uncomfortable beds, but owing to the circumstances, I didn't mind it at all. Later, when I saw the deep cracks in my bike helmet, I had a better understanding of what the emergency crews, and witnesses, were thinking.

A doctor was poking the bottom of my feet with his ballpoint pen to determine whether I could feel anything. Behind him, I could see the bustle of hospital activity; beside me a white curtain separated my bed from a groaning patient next door. Wheelchairs and gurneys, nurses and doctors, were all moving back and forth, looking like movie extras in some surreal drama. That is how I felt. I felt a part of, but distant from, reality. The doctor was tickling my feet with strokes of his pen. I wanted to laugh and cry at the same time, because I felt everything. I wasn't paralysed, but I hurt.

I was wheeled over to the x-ray room, where I posed for a few X-ray-ted shots of my pubic area, and then I was returned to a softer bed in the ward before Maureen arrived.

I had given a nurse in Emergency my home phone number, and he had called Maureen. The nurse on duty recognised my last name as that of a co-worker,

my brother Scott. Maureen phoned Scott immediately after hanging up with the hospital, and he and his wife, April, picked Maureen up and brought her to the hospital.

Maureen was standing silently beside me, grasping my hand. I could see tears rolling down her cheeks when I began going into shock. I was shivering – I felt like throwing up – as my legs shook – and my voice wavered as I tried to comfort Maureen.

“I’m just a little cold,” I said. Scott fetched a blanket then tested my blood sugar. With a curse of “no wonder!” he rushed off to locate cookies and juice.

Time moved in packets of events instead of minutes. Arrival, diagnosis, X-rays. Maureen couldn’t have arrived within minutes, but that’s what it felt like. I was resting calmly when a police officer arrived, seeking information to complete his report. I had many questions to ask. What happened? How did the collision occur? Where had *that* car come from? The officer related what witnesses had said, asked for my driver’s licence number, my address, phone numbers, and then left a copy of the police report. He also conveyed his opinion that I was lucky and should be more careful cycling in traffic.

I had been riding home on my regular route along Lougheed Highway. It was a clear day, and I was feeling pretty chipper because traffic was backed up heavier than usual. Riding home on bike, I was not affected by the traffic volume. However, the effect of traffic volume is that many drivers get irritated and some do outright stupid things.

The motorist I collided with was travelling in the opposite direction. No doubt he was fed up with volume delays by the time he pulled into the left-turn bay. He should not have proceeded with his left turn, because the light was red. Witnesses say he did stop, but only for a moment.

As I approached the intersection, to go straight through on a green light, I watched for motorists on my right who turn right on the red and for motorists on my left who sometimes pull out in front to turn right. I am used to what motorists will do in heavy traffic at this intersection.

Motorists going in my direction were not entering the intersection, even though the light was green, because of traffic volume. The motorist in the left-turn bay decided to run the red just as I was entering the intersection. He was, understandably, accelerating as fast as possible to hasten his illegal act. To me, it seemed like a car appeared out of nowhere.

The collision point was the motorists’ passenger door. Two thousand dollars damage; “Sorry bud.” My left side ached while voodoo auto body workers banged out that damn dent. My bike frame was destroyed, and much of my fine bicycle equipment was lost or damaged when I bounced off the car, sailed through the air, and landed on my back and head. Thank goodness I was going relatively slow.

My damaged bike was taken to the fire hall a couple hundred metres from the intersection. Most of the motorists at the scene were off shift fire fighters. They quickly controlled the situation, stabilised my neck and performed other emergency procedures. The ambulance was right there; the spine board came out, and very soon I was at the hospital. A few hours later, I was heading home.

Released from the hospital in good company, I rode a wheelchair as far as the parking lot where Scott had to lift me into his truck. We stopped to pick up my damaged bike on the way home. Though I don’t usually get emotional about inanimate objects, I mourned the loss of my bike. It had been a trusting friend, and we had been through a lot of bad weather and good times together.

I wasn’t feeling very well when we arrived at the house, so Scott helped me up the stairs and into bed. I leaned heavily on him and used the banister to support my other side before falling into bed.

Maureen and I cried that night. We cried for being lucky, for being alive, and we cried for all the “might have beens” that such a collision can bring. We cried thinking about one of us being alone, one of us being dead, ME!

I felt guilty about putting Maureen through this. It was hard not to. There is never a good time to have a serious accident. To make matters worse, Maureen had

been on stress leave for a month. She was stressed out, burnt out, on medication for depression, and on a waiting list to see a psychiatrist. Maureen was in a slump and didn't need another call for emotions.

Maureen and I met in a shopping mall in 1982. She was selling woman's clothing and I sold stereos and televisions in the store next door. A year after we married, Maureen left retail to attend a travel agents school. She began working as a reservations agent for a travel wholesaler and, over the next thirteen years, worked her way up from reservations agent, in an office of eight, to supervisor in an office of over forty.

I wasn't a great TV salesman, nor was I any good at selling men's clothing nor selling jewellery. When I was “*let go*” from the jewellers, the manager said he thought it was all for the best. Turns out he was right. I qualified for an Employment Insurance program, took an electronics course at British Columbia Institute of Technology, and began working as a stock room clerk. Within a couple of years I was a logistics administrator for a very large computer company and, when I was downsized in 1998, I was the Inventory Controller at a sinking marine navigation company.

For both of us, our jobs had become increasingly serious and better paying. With the help of Maureen's parents, we bought a townhouse, furniture and a new car. We also bought a few nice bikes, ate out a lot, worked late and had a regular cat sitter. We were busy almost every weekend with friends, functions, courses, camping or cycling.

Maureen stopped cycling after high school but happily returned to riding in 1989 when we bought inexpensive and matching mountain bikes. Maureen doesn't really enjoy solo cycling, so when she decided to ride to work, she talked a friend into cycling downtown with her. The more she cycled, the better she got. She attended women's ride whenever possible, embraced off-road riding on the weekend, and quite often scared me with her downhill speeds.

I've been a recreational cyclist since my high school years in the mid 70's, but I didn't begin bike commuting until 1991. At first I found commuting

exhausting. When I first started commuting by bike, I rode 46 km each day, three times in a week. For a few years I kept a meticulous log of my cycling distances: 3,000 km the first year, 6,000 in the next year, and in 1995 I rode over 17,000 km in a year by commuting 60 km every workday except one, and always riding on weekends and vacations.

In 1993 I joined Cycling BC, took a Canbike Cycling Skills course and volunteered time with the advocacy committee. In 1994, I was declared volunteer of the year, and for four years I was a volunteer board member. I became a cycling skills instructor and began teaching cycling safety on summer weekends.

Maureen and I began bicycle camping together on weekends. When I was busy with a weekend course, Maureen would often go camping with friends. In 1996, after a few years of weekend camping trips, we felt ready for a two-week, 608 kilometre off-road trip. We rode to Bamfield, on the West Coast of Vancouver Island, and back home on as many trails and logging roads as we could find. The stage was set for an extended cycling holiday, all we needed was more time off. We often wondered how we could arrange to get more than two or three weeks off for an extended bicycle trip, but our imaginations were swathed in the cloth of social expectations that seemed to demand we keep our jobs and house.

Early 1998 was a time of great personal excitement for me. My identity became closely tied to cycling safety, and never having had a serious bike accident, I felt I was the model of cycling safety. The Bike Safety Poster Boy. Friends called me Mr. Canbike. I lived it, breathed it and taught it with enthusiasm. Most of our friends had, or their spouse had, taken a course from me.

I co-starred in a cycling video *RoadWorthy* and was doing well on weekend instructor development courses at a local college. I was feeling optimistic about leaving inventory control to take up some sort of teaching or training job.

After Doug, my friend and boss, left for another company, my job as Inventory Controller became a means to an end rather than the once enjoyable challenge of effectively controlling material flow in production environments. Gag

me! I was working to pay the mortgage and doing poorly at a job I was good at. The saving grace was that I found enjoyment bicycle commuting three hours a day and taking Adult Education courses at a local college on the weekends. Compared to Maureen, I was doing great.

From the time of Maureen's first burnout symptoms – which affected us both, through to her recovery from depression in early 1999 – including my recuperation from the collision, we both began to feel different about work and life. A devoted employee, Maureen discovered her time and devotion was wasted. What is the use of trying your best everyday, often going above and beyond the call of duty, when the benefit is strictly monetary and without respect to your life energy?

Like any broken relationship, it is surprising to find the difference between what you had and what you thought you had. Maureen thought her work ethic and service efforts would be recognised by her employers granting her request for extended time off. Surely they could tell she was getting stressed out and had her best interests in mind.

The first sure sign of burn out occurred one beautiful sunny Hawaiian morning in January 1998. We were getting ready to go mountain biking together on the lush tropical slopes of the Big Island. While showering, Maureen was suddenly overwhelmed by feelings of despair and began sobbing uncontrollably.

I thought she was mad at me, but she said she wasn't. Still she cried. She wouldn't tell me what was wrong, because she didn't know. I continued to think she was mad at me, and I would try to figure out what I said, or did, then apologise. The last thing she needed was a quiz, but that's what I gave her.

She asked to be left alone awhile, so I rode my bike aimlessly around town for an hour. When I returned she was in an okay mood. We went cycling, had a wonderful time, and didn't discuss the sobbing until we were back at home and Maureen was preparing to explain her feelings to her doctor.

Though Maureen seems impervious to colds and flu's, she has suffered with menstrual migraines for years. When the migraines started to come more often, Maureen went to talk to her doctor. They talked about ageing, about stress, and about

how birth control pills are linked to cancer. Maureen was prescribed stronger and stronger migraine medicines, some of which were so strong she had to take them with motion sickness pills.

A dental appliance recommended to ease tooth grinding didn't help ease the migraines. Neither did regular neck, shoulder and back massages. Birth control pills, by all evidence, seemed to be the culprit. Alternatives were discussed, tubes were tied, and still the migraines came.

In early 1998 Maureen became less and less enthusiastic about work, cycling, piano, baking, and sewing, all her favourite things. She complained of being too tired in the evenings to do anything. She wanted to sleep all weekend. Due to lack of exercise, she was gaining weight, her clothes weren't fitting, and the sobbing fits occurred more often. In March, her doctor prescribed Luvox for depression.

It was in mid January, upon our return from Hawaii, that Maureen requested a leave of absence. We began to read about depression and agreed, from all we read, that Maureen needed time off work. Her time off request was sent to head office in Toronto in January. February and March past without comment. Finally the reply arrived: Request Denied. Maureen felt crushed.

With the aid of books and pamphlets, we were trying to understand the causes and effects of stress and depression, but it was too late. Angry her request was denied, over wrought, over tired and stressed to the breaking point, Maureen became confused at work and was unable to understand co-workers who were talking to her.

Holding off the tears while travelling home on public transit took the last of her strength. Maureen began to sob as soon as she walked through the door of the house. She had neither the strength to walk upstairs nor the ability to explain what was going on. I pushed her up the stairs, drew her a hot bath, and waited until she could talk.

Maureen made a Saturday morning doctor appointment, and her doctor immediately recommended she stay home for at least two months. After the appointment we went to Maureen's office to clean out her desk and leave notes to

make it as easy as possible for a new week to begin without her. So ended thirteen years of excellent, dedicated, award-winning service.

In the first days of her leave, Maureen often said she felt like a fake or a failure because she couldn't cope with work and it seemed everyone else could. She kept saying she'd play the piano more, but the effort it took to play was too great. She claimed to have few feelings, happy or sad, about anything and, like a piano with only three working keys, felt her emotional range of expression was severely limited.

In her first month of stress leave, Maureen spent the bulk of her time sitting on the couch, hardly reading and mostly staring into space thinking of nothing. The weather was nice, but she had little energy to go for a walk. "THIS HOUSE IS A MESS!" used to be the rally cry for intensive weekend cleaning, foul moods and spousal guilt. A house can be scrubbed, dusted and vacuumed until it is fit for a royal visit, but it is never enough unless enough is specified in advance. If a little cleaning makes you feel better, will a lot of cleaning make you feel great? Maureen also tried wallpapering the bathroom to see if it would make everything better, but it didn't solve anything except prove that catching up on chores is not the path to happiness. We wouldn't discover happiness for many more months.

We quickly discovered that qualifying for benefits wasn't exactly a stress-free experience, and when I awoke the morning after my collision, I lay in bed contemplating the difficulties of arranging the same benefits for me.

When I tried to get out of bed, the insurance problems suddenly seemed like the least of my worries. I couldn't stand up. I could feel everything in my legs, I could move them up and down easily, but they couldn't support my weight. I fell back to bed in pain and fear that I couldn't walk.

For two days I got around the house by crawling or being supported by Maureen. On the third day I was able to visit my doctor using crutches. For a person who rarely bruises, the huge yellow bruise on my left leg spoke volumes about force of impact. Two sets of X-rays were needed before doctors finally discovered a buckle fracture of the left pubic ramus. My left side sit-bone had crumbled in the

collision. In retrospect, I could have helped in the diagnosis by explaining where I hurt the very most, but I was embarrassed. I also could have shown the doctors the bike saddle I had broken between my legs.

Time off from work was recommended for the bone, and physiotherapy for the numerous sprained leg muscles. In the third week after the collision I was able to walk shakily but unaided. During the sixth week I tried riding my bike cautiously and felt only mild discomfort.

We had two wonderful months off together. Maureen began reading self-help books and trying esteem-building exercises. Together we tried to release *our inner selves* or whatever the author du jour claimed we were missing from our life. Mostly we talked and listened to each other with the intensity of our first dates. Better than dating, we had nothing to hide after twelve years of marriage. No fear of blurting out something inappropriate, we had each other's full attention while we talked. We were completely open to each other's thoughts and helped each other explore ideas. Slowly we felt our perspectives about work, life and cultural expectations shift. Like my recovering limbs, we wobbled on new thoughts, exercised our brain cells, rested and read a lot.

For alternate support, Maureen made appointments with Bea, a psychologist recommended by her MD. Bea recommended Maureen read *The Artists Way* by Julia Cameron, and do the exercises at the end of each chapter. I read along with Maureen, or a chapter ahead, and we compared results of the exercises. As we read more books together, we spent more time talking about ideas in books and our feelings. Book discussions soon became a main component of our weekly activities.

Maureen had been reading a financial book, a subject I never touch, about divesting and simplifying. She began to realise that the house was like a lead weight in life's panniers. An anchor, a dead albatross, a white elephant, or whatever you identify with as an impediment to freedom. She asked me if I'd like to sell the house and take off. I immediately agreed and went back to the book I was reading, because I didn't think she was serious. The house was her baby. She did the bulk of the cleaning, all the gardening and interior decorating. Sell the house? Sure thing, honey.

When it became clear she really meant it, I reluctantly agreed it sounded like a good idea. I recall sitting on the too-small sundeck of our town house an hour later, facing the lane, gazing over a lawn the size of most people's washrooms – and regarded by many dogs to be exactly that – thinking about how much I'd miss the place we called our own. I thought about how difficult it would be to get a leave of absence. I'd probably have to quit. I thought of many reasons why we shouldn't go. I wondered if Maureens' medication was influencing her decisions and if she would still feel the same way the next day. The next day she felt the same, or better, and the day after too. I agreed to sell the house and quit our jobs if we couldn't get leaves of absence.

Friends were excited for us. Parents and siblings were slower to accept that we would do such a thing. Most wondered how I talked Maureen into such a plan. They didn't seem convinced when we explained how it came about. No matter, it was a lucid and lovely idea, and I felt sure it was proof that Maureen was well again.

During my convalescence I snuck back to work twice, in the evenings, to update inventory transactions. I was sure the company needed me. When I went back to work in July, inventory control was limping along without me. I expected a mess, and it was, but it was a blow to my self-worth that both my job, and myself, were so undervalued. No effort had been made to maintain inventory while I was gone, and there was no will to understand what was involved in straightening the mess. Hardly inspiring work conditions.

With the year-end Physical Inventory looming in the not-too-distant future, I tried to get a handle on what had happened to the inventory. A pre-inventory, physical count was needed to adjust stock levels to reflect reality. Finally, by September's end, reports and graphs all made up, I could report all was, mostly, accounted for. Two days later, I was let go, laid off, axed, or, as it is currently phrased, freed to discover my potential elsewhere. Like Maureen, I felt I had wasted a lot of my life energy.

My wife and I, we're from Port Coquitlam. That's some 20 miles inland from Vancouver. Nope, never fished a day in my life though I lived by the Fraser River. Grew up there but always had jobs in town. Wife did too. She grew up always further inland than I. Youngest daughter of three to a dairy farmer. A might spoiled she is, not in a fancy way, just getting her way. Nice gal, been married 15 years. I'm second oldest in my mom's bunch of four boys, I'm used to getting along, I am. My folks are city folk, I'm just like them. The wife and I are here to ride our bikes back home to BC. Lovely place BC is, this place is well too. Flew out here the other day gonna start soon. Pedal bikes yup. Yeah I know it sounds crazy to ride them bikes all that way, gotta do it though. We sold everything, stowed all our gear at the outlaws. Besides, I didn't want to say no to the wife when she suggested we do this. Took me 14 years to make her think it was her idea. How about you? You hail from the Rock?

Chapter 2.

St. John's, Newfoundland, May 27th, 1999.

Our flight to St. John's stopped in Calgary and Halifax. Departing at 7 a.m. A.M. and arriving in St. John's around 8:30 p.m., it literally took us all day to get there. Surprisingly, all our luggage travelled without extra charge because it was considered sports equipment. When we booked our flight, we were told there would be a charge for extra luggage. Another surprise was that only one hot meal was served during the flight. We had packed bagels just in case the assumed meals (plural!) were inedible. Our bagels were long gone before we ever saw meal service.

Maureen and I were together in row 16 but separated by the aisle. Beside me was a mother and daughter heading for Corner Brook, Newfoundland. The daughter, Nikki, about 6 years old, spent her time reading, doing homework and looking out of the window. Nikki and I had a short conversation when, for a short while, Nikki sat between me and her mother. I told Nikki that Maureen and I were riding our bikes home. She told me that she and her Mom were going to visit Gramma, who was sick, and when she was dead and buried in a coffin, they'd go hiking. Nikki's Mom injected, 'Mum's getting on.'

The airport building in St. John's is almost identical to the one in Kelowna, BC. It's oddly comforting to know where the washrooms and cafeteria are. Our luggage arrived, unharmed and complete, setting to rest our fears of beginning our adventure without bicycles. There was so much stuff, two trips in the Airport Inn mini-van were needed.

The Airport Inn was a little old and stinky, but it was clean. We were tired, due to a time zone difference of four and a half hours, and called the front desk twice for check-out time extensions. I built the bikes up as fast as I could in a slow-motion sort of daze. It felt way too early to have to figure out what goes where. By early afternoon I had both bikes built up and in the lobby.

While I was building the bikes up, Maureen went out to the lobby with the bike case and asked for the courtesy van to take her to the airport. The van was unavailable, but they called Maureen a cab and agreed to pay for it as long as she was quick. An Air Canada employee supposed, after we described the bike case over the phone, it would cost at least \$28 to ship to Vancouver. However, when the crew at the cargo office saw the case, they priced it at \$240 economy to Vancouver. Maureen was tired too, so with the Taxi waiting, and the time for price comparing long past, she shipped it. What the hell, what you save on one end, you spend on the other. We should have had a ground courier pick the case up from the Airport Inn.

It was a half-hour ride from the airport to Compton House Bed and Breakfast in St. John's. We arrived soaking wet from the heavy rain, but since it was mostly downhill, we arrived in good spirits.

Compton House is a beautifully set Heritage home with a lawn as long and prestigious as its history. The owners have maintained the old-world charms while converting it into a B&B. We thought we were staying there, but other than checking in, out, and having breakfast 5 times, we didn't see much of the old place.

Instead, we stayed at Compton House Cottage next door. The cottage is really a house – not quite as large as the house, but still pretty big. I enjoyed the cottage because we were almost always alone; I was familiar with the décor style and

found it amusing to sit in a French Provincial style living room, slouch on the couch, or put my feet up on the coffee table. The kind of things you don't do at home.

On post cards to my family, I described the cottage as 'Dad's living room with wooden floors instead of white carpet.' There were many remarkable similarities. The couches, light-coloured upholstery, crystal table lamps, dark-wood matching coffee and end tables and a white fireplace were almost identical. Little bits of brass trim finished off the “definitely Dad” look.

Maureen liked the bedroom much better than the common living room, a.k.a. Dad's room. Our bedroom, upstairs, was called the Lavender room. A small, some would say quaint, room of well-considered purple hues and white trim.

We ordered pizza the first night and walked fifteen minutes into town for supper the other four nights. One night Maureen ordered a whole lobster and, when it arrived, neither of us knew how to eat it. It was boiled and cracked, but the server forgot to give Maureen the meat extraction tool set.

'What's this,' Maureen said, pointing at little clumps of red stuff surrounding the white lobster meat she had managed to extract.

'I dunno, maybe eggs?' I speculated.

'Thanks a lot,' and she gave me the sourpuss face that said I just ruined her whole dinner. We asked the server.

'It's eggs,' she said, ' you have a female lobster. That is considered a delicacy. Oh hey I forgot to give you the picks. Sorry about that I'll be right back.'

Behind Maureen, an experienced diner attacked his lobster with gusto and savagery beyond compare. He cracked, pulled, poked, prodded and sucked every morsel of meat from his purchased carapace and then proved his talents once again taking up the residue on his wife's plate. I had the salmon fillet with rice.

St. John's numerous, easy to find, tourist attractions helped us settle into tourist life. We rode and walked around the area to see Signal Hill, where Marconi received the first Trans Atlantic radio waves, and Cape Spear, the most eastern point in North America. At Quidi Vidi Village, a really old part of town, we missed seeing a whale by fifteen minutes. At Maureen's favourite place, the Marine Science Centre,

we were entertained by four rollicking seals who, given free choice of two pools, crammed into the smaller one and swam all over each other. On our second last day we went south to Bay Bulls to take the Witless Island Bird Sanctuary and whale watching tour.

Though we are west coasters, neither Maureen or I had eaten a whole lobster or gone whale watching. In 1972 my family moved from Transcona, Manitoba, to Port Coquitlam, BC, 30 kms east of Vancouver. Maureen grew up on a dairy farm in the Fraser Valley 60 kms east of Vancouver. Neither of us has a lot of marine experience. Maureen enjoys sailing with friends, but I get sea sick, bus sick, car sick...

Despite the probability I'd get sick, we went on a whale watching tour anyway because Maureen wanted desperately to see Puffins and whales. We saw puffins by the hundreds and three whales. The trip began well enough: in protected waters. Our tour leaders thanked us for choosing them, explained where the safety gear was and told us what we'd see on the island.

'You'll see a lot of sea birds,' our captain explained, 'most of them are PPF's. Are there any birdwatchers in the crowd? Good. Have you ever heard of a PPF? No? Most of our sea birds are Piss Poor Flyers, ya stop, ya drop.' (Ba-doom poom.) Anyway folks have a good time, and if we hear there are any whales out in the open water, we'll go out there.'

We went out there. Up and down. I tried to keep smiling as I felt worse and worse. Up and down, I get bile just thinking of it. I closed my eyes, then I kept them on the horizon. I sat at the back of the boat. I smiled, I waved and I contained myself. Is there a Latin saying for that?

Unbeknownst to her two cameras, Maureen saw some whales. I saw them, too, thank goodness. I wasn't trying to see them, but the damn boat was doing pirouettes on the top of every wave (or was it me?). Eventually, I was looking the right way. My nose was pointing the right way too.

Imagine the crowd at the front of the boat. Gustly winds, waves rocking the boat, and eight people are steadying themselves on the four-person starboard handrail. All of them hoping for a good view and the perfect whale picture. They alternately brace themselves during the up-wave, then jockey for a better position on the down-wave. It looked very much like a Chinese circus performance, from my view point.

A whale breaks through on the starboard side. 'Oooooooo' says the crowd. The whale vents through his blowhole, and the crowd smiles and laughs. They are actually here for this moment in time. The whale mist approaches the smiling tourists. Suddenly they are not smiling, oooooing or ahhhhhing. Suddenly there is puffin' and wailing of a different sort. The look and sound of disgust fills the air, but that's not all. The gusting wind brings a cod liver oil dog burp/farts smell to our lungs. I almost lost my breakfast. Luckily, all I lost was my baseball cap in a gust of wind 5 metres from shore.

For the pleasure of spending \$35, getting sick and losing my cap, I saw a bird sanctuary, which looked more like a bird shit sanctuary, and I saw and smelled a whale. I have, in the way of compensation, given myself free unlimited use of the PPF joke. I also learned I'll never go on a whale watching tour again.

For \$35 Maureen has fond memories of those cute little Puffins. She also had the thrill of seeing whales up close and personal. She has two blurry whale pictures (or two decent ocean pictures) as keepsakes. She loved every minute of it.

On our last day in St. John's we met up with friends of a friend. Our optician, in PoCo, is a born and raised St. John's townie. When we told him we were starting our cross-Canada trip in St. John's, he phoned his pal Terry and asked him to show us around town when we arrived.

Terry and Denise picked us up at the cottage and gave us the best city tour we could hope for. I soon lost my bearings, but we had a great time driving around. Terry drove out to Conception Bay, where we watched the sunset. He grew up around the Bay and lamented its recent attraction to townie and tourist alike. An access road, where there was once a path, a sandy beach where debris used to be the

norm. How things have changed since the times when he and his buddies would sit there all night with a case of beer. I'm pretty sure we all see different sunsets, and endings, in our own personal way.

Maureen and I left our house in Port Coquitlam, then our family, and lastly our friends, all on separate days. Each of those days felt like a new beginning and a new ending. Leaving the comfort of Compton House in St. John's, we felt our vacation was ending and our cycling trip was beginning.

On the morning of June 2, 1999, we packed our bikes and equipment into a taxi and drove out to the airport. Earlier in the week we had booked seats on the 9:30 a.m. flight to St. Anthony. When we booked, the agent could not guarantee our bikes would be on the same flight. We were instructed to pick up our ticket at the Air Labrador counter and to come early. We arrived two hours before the scheduled flight departure, thinking that would ensure our bikes travelled with us and that we could sort out any problems, should they occur. But when we arrived there was no ticket staff on duty; an hour later the counter was still vacant, and we were getting a little worried. Finally, half an hour before departure, Canada 3000 attendants, at the adjoining counter, took care of our ticketing.

Our bikes were packed in plastic bags, our panniers were tagged and strapped together, and we went out to the runway to watch them load the bikes on to the plane. It was a relief to see our bikes would be coming with us. Even as we processed our tickets and luggage at the counter, the attendants still could not guarantee our bikes would travel with us.

It was raining and there was a cold wind when we landed at St. Anthony airport. Once again the bikes arrived unharmed despite, this time, being transported in plastic bags that made them look like bikewichs. Not relishing the thought of riding in cold miserable weather, we slowly built the bikes hoping for the weather to clear. Finally facing facts, we started off into the first of many headwinds.

We had been monitoring the St. Anthony weather forecast. St. Anthony, located on the north tip of Newfoundland's western peninsula, was usually 2 or 4 C°. Pretty consistently about 10° lower than St. John's.

St. Anthony airport is located on a barren stretch of ground fifty kilometres south of St. Anthony near no other facility. Locals explained to us how the airport ended up in the middle of nowhere. The populations of both Flower's Cove and St. Anthony wanted an airport but couldn't agree which town should get it. The bureaucratic resolution was to put the airport halfway between the two towns, thereby equally annoying town folk and tourist alike.

Many hours of brown inland scenery later, we stopped for drink at the first and only place to stop, a campground around 10 kilometres before the city of St. Anthony. The proprietor of the campground made our arrival seem like a great imposition to his work day. We had planned to camp there, but due to his less-than-enthusiastic welcome and because camp fuel wasn't available, we decided to ride into St. Anthony where we spent the night at the Vinland Motel.

On that first day of fully packed riding, through wind and rain, we could barely average ten kilometres per hour. Six hours for only fifty kilometres. We arrived in St. Anthony, tired, worn out, and wondering if we had made a big mistake. We were already wondering about our plans to ride to Hay Cove, see the Viking settlement at L'Anse aux Meadows, stay overnight at the Viking Nest B&B and head south the following day.

Sure enough, our plans were dashed the next day while riding through biting winds, freezing rain and heavy fog to Hay Cove. In need of warmth and food, we entered The Dark Tickle in St. Lunaire. Though their teashop was not yet open for the season, the owners plugged in the kettle, cleared off a table and let us sit. One of the owners brought Maureen a heavy warm jacket so she could wrap herself up and stop shivering.

Dark Tickle is an interesting term which, we were told, refers to harbours behind cracks in the cliff walls, or between two narrowly spaced islands. The crack,

or channel, leads to a protected bay. In this case, it was protection from the wind and cold.

The Dark Tickle shop is a general store and gift shop that sells art crafts and preserves prepared by locals. This was the first place we saw bottles of Partridge berry, Squash berry and Bakeapple berry jams. Along the west coast of Newfoundland we often tried these jams. My favourite was Partridge berry jam, which reminded me of blueberry, and Maureen preferred Bakeapple berry jam, which has a raspberry look, but not taste.

After an hour or so of warming up, drinking tea and explaining ourselves, we made our way to the Vikings Nest B&B in Hay Cove, arriving too late in the day to visit L'Anse aux Meadow for the Viking exhibits. We warmed up and acquainted ourselves with the friendly B&B owner. Thelma, conscious that there was no place to go out for supper in Hay Cove, invited us to share her supper of moose stew. We were hungry and happy to accept her offer. A thick dark stew was brought out, and our glasses were filled with water and thick chunks of iceberg ice.

On the evening TV weather report, from St. Anthony Airport, they reported it had been -9 in the shade and +2 in the sun on that foggy day. No wonder we were so cold. Just before sunset the fog lifted, the wind settled down and, for the first time, we could see the ocean.

The next day we walked one kilometre to L'Anse aux Meadow, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Inside the Parks Canada interpretative centre was a display of the tools, art and boats of these early Viking settlers. We watched a film about the archaeological search for legendary Vinland and the discovery of this site in the 1960's by Norwegian archaeologists Helge Ingstad and his wife Anne Stine Ingstad.

The whole place was fascinating. Walking through the recreated sod huts made me pause to consider the quality of life 1000 years ago. We were told that age thirty-five was about as old as Norse settlers lived. Chimneys hadn't been invented yet. The smoke from pit fires, in the middle of the room, drifted up towards a hatched door in the sod roof. Smoke would have filled their houses, lungs and lives, perhaps even causing their early deaths.

A forge was excavated. The Vikings had to make nails, from ore, to fix ships. Everything they wanted they made. Perhaps it is better to say, everything they needed they made. I think they wouldn't have wanted much more than to leave. And leave they did; I don't think anyone is asking why they left. One look around at the low rocky ground with dwarf shrubs and trees, one feel of the wind and cold, was enough to convince me that L'Anse aux Meadow is no place to live without the support of food, medicine and clothing supplies.

It was a cold, rainy and foggy day, and we were glad we weren't riding. The forecast for the next day was the same, so we decided to ask Thelma if anyone in the Cove could offer us a ride back as far as the airport.

Having experienced enough of the wind and cold, knowing there are no facilities in the seventy kilometres between Hay Cove and the airport, we hoped a ride would allow us to cycle the fifty kilometres past the airport, to the coast, and find evening accommodations.

Thelma's neighbour Carmen, Carm to his friends, arrived the next morning at 8 a.m. to chauffeur us to the airport. We loaded up our gear in his pickup truck and headed out on Highway 430S, known as The Viking Trail in tourist literature.

In all his seventy years, and despite all his children having moved west, Carm has always lived in Hay Cove and has never left Newfoundland. He had the pleasure of working on the archaeological digs, a kilometre from home, for the last twenty years of his working life and now spends his time trout fishing. Trout fishing is fishing from a pond. Fishing, on the other hand, is done on the ocean. Every two years Carm gets a moose licence. He used to get one every year, but it's just him and the wife now.

Carm explained a few of the roadside mysteries of Newfoundland to us. As we rode from the airport to St. Anthony, and again riding to Hay Cove, we had seen little gardens and woodpiles at the side of the road. Carm said residents have roadside gardens because there isn't enough topsoil in the coves to grow potatoes and turnips. Instead of trucking in soil, they get permission to farm a little section beside

the highway. The gardens are easy to get to, and residents can rake up all the soil they need to create deep-trenched gardens.

Carm also told us that inexpensive logging licences, for personal use only, can be obtained for residents interested in logging for wood fuel or building additions to their houses. Logging takes place in the winter on snowmobiles with sleighs. Loggers head into the bush on snowmobiles, fall trees, strip them, load them on sleighs and pull them to the side of the road. During the spring and summer, when not troutng, they chop or saw their wood and leave it to dry in the sun at the roadside.

Carm says nobody steals another family's wood or vegetables. Some people even leave their snowmobiles beside their woodpile all year. Portable sawmills are used to mill wood into boards suitable for additions to the house and, we noticed, many houses we passed on Hwy 430S were getting additional rooms that year. What a sensible thing to do! Build when you have the wood and the weather is good, both are free.

Talking to Carm, Thelma, and a few people around town, we obtained a little insight into the way of life in those parts. We were treated very politely, almost royally. In an Old English sort of way, Maureen was referred to as the lady or m'lady, and I was sir. It wasn't a mock sort of thing, either. A local vocal anomaly is to drop the H from the front of some words or add an H in front of a vowel beginning others. Icebergs became Hicebergs, Everybody was Heverybody, Hotels were Otels, and the name Hedderson was pronounced Edderson. I believe the rule is, if it has an H; drop it if it needs an H, use it, and when in doubt, mumble.

While in St. Anthony we learned some local history and discovered what would have happened to the Vikings had they stayed. One hundred years earlier Dr. Wilfred Grenfell was touring the east coast where he landed at St. Anthony, and parts of Labrador. Grenfell found starvation and disease rampant among the inhabitants. He saw living conditions so horrible he spent the bulk of his life trying to improve the lot of those poor souls. The staff and displays at the Home and Museum in St. Anthony help interpret the many social and health changes Dr. Grenfell brought to

this area. The legacy of health Dr. Grenfell created in northern Newfoundland and Labrador lives on in the buildings and a foundation named after him.

This north-west coast of Newfoundland was also the setting for Anne Proulx's excellent book *'The Shipping News.'* If you are ever out that way go see a place called Quirpon (pronounced Car-poon) where, locals insist, *The Shipping News* is set.

I mentioned that book to our B&B hostess. She provided such a litany of complaints that I didn't mention it again to anyone. She thought the book was inaccurate factually and insulting to Newfoundlanders, let alone the image it creates of Newfoundlanders in the minds of other people. I could understand her point of view, but it is still a great story.

After an hour's ride by truck, Carm dropped us at the airport and wished us well. We headed for the coast, Eddies Cove, hoping to get accommodations in Flower's Cove. No luck. We pressed on into the wind and, on occasion, sought shelter from the wind behind boarded up houses.

The wind was fierce at times, and we weren't used to it yet. We stopped to talk to a cyclist coming the other way. As he got closer we noticed, with the force of wind at his tail, he was coasting uphill towards us. He was heading for St. Anthony, ninety kilometres away, and we felt sure he'd make it that day.

We saw a lot of deteriorating, sun-bleached, wooden boats and lobster traps sitting on the rocky shores. We also saw a few fishing boats in the water. Amidst the overall sense of depression in the area, we saw an expensive looking bridal party in St. Barbe which consisted of eight brides maids and eight groomsman. Certainly a land of contrasts.

Seventy kilometres west and south of the airport, ten hours on the road later, we approached St. Barbe in a pitifully tired state. Our tires sunk into the soft, fresh unpacked sand and gravel of road construction. Teary eyed with exhaustion, her remaining energy being absorbed by the roadway, Maureen walked the last two kilometres in to town. I wholeheartedly agreed when Maureen suggested we stay at the Dockside Motel.

The next day we rode for five and a half hours into headwinds, going thirty-four kilometres. We had been looking for a campground, which no longer existed, and ended at Reef Harbour junction gas station, store and Tuckers Cottages.

In a short-lived bid to save money, we asked the young woman minding the station/store/cottages if we could pitch our tent between cottages. Upon discovering the cottages were \$40, that they had a laundry facility, and that rain was beginning to fall, we took cottage #4 for the night and watched the heavy rains fall through the night. It would have been a miserable night in a tent.

Mr. Tucker himself came around to introduce himself in the evening. His daughter, the young woman who had rented us the room earlier that day, had warned us her loquacious father would be by. Actually she said, 'Wait 'til you meet my father, he's a character.'

Wiry thin, in his seventies or better, Mr. Tucker was not a man short of energy or words. He bound and strode as much as he walked, and when he rapped on the door I looked around for the room receipt because I was sure that knock meant business.

Mr. Tucker wouldn't come further in the cottage than to allow us to close the door behind him. He introduced himself, asked if we were settled in and, upon hearing we were snug, began a non-stop half hour monologue in which we learned of all the political wrestling of, and in, Newfoundland since joining the rest of Canada. We heard about the problems facing Newfoundlanders in the fishing, lumber, oil and mining industries as well as Mr. Tuckers' opinions about how to cure these problems. At the end, we learned of Mr. Tucker's valiant, but scorned, efforts as he set out to correct the wrongdoings of government.

Some of the issues that upset Mr. Tucker were that Hibernia is on their doorstep, but they pay one of the highest prices for petroleum in Canada, because it comes from Alberta. He was also irritated that a large oil reserve was discovered, on land, near St. Anthony but the governments had no desire to set up the infrastructure to create Newfoundland independence.

Mr. Tucker talked about large Canadian fish processing companies who sold their boats to the French when the moratorium on fishing was declared, and leased them back to fish in the areas off limits to Newfoundlanders.

"How is it," Mr. Tucker asked, "that it is okay for water tankers to pull up to Newfoundland shores, load up with fresh water, and then take it to the states, but a proposal made by a resident businessman, to open a bottling company, employ Newfoundlanders and sell fresh water, was turned down?"

Most of the reasons Mr. Tucker gave for the denial of business ventures, and therefore employment of Newfoundlanders, was that the ventures weren't in the economic interest of the shareholders of large corporations whose board members just happened to be MLA's, MP's, and he insinuated, Premiers and Prime Ministers.

The next morning, due to the sound of wind and rain, it was 10 a.m. before we thought we should be going. Mr. Tucker came around to see if we had slept all right, and we asked him if there was anyone around who could give us a lift just a little ways down the road.

Mr. Tucker left immediately, saying there was a fellow at the gas pumps who might do it. He returned saying the fellow would do it for \$50. I said no, Maureen said yes and, in the end, after having an economics conversation in front of Mr. Tucker, he went back to the gas pump, told the guy to go, then brought his truck around to our cottage. He said he'd take us fifty kilometres down the road to the Irving Gas station at the Port Sanderson highway junction. We scrambled to get ready.

We rode to the River of Ponds campground, and though it was closed, we stayed there the night. We had passed another closed campground in Hawke's Bay, but since we hadn't really travelled far since Mr. T dropped us off, we decided to use the washrooms and keep going. At the washroom building we began chatting with a couple from Ontario who were taking a break from driving north to St. Anthony to walk their dogs. Viv and Seb thought our journey was a marvellous idea. Viv and Maureen developed a rapport so quickly that we were invited to stay with them in

Markham. Since Markham, Ontario was on our planned route, we promised to keep in touch by adding them to our email update list. Little did we know the important role Viv would play in our lives seven weeks later.

Shallow Bay Campground in Gros Morne National Park had not yet opened for the season. The campsites are large and had been recently cleaned in preparation for opening to the public in the week following our visit. We set up our tent near a large shelter and walked along a boardwalk, which took us over the sand dunes and high grasses to the sea shore. The shoreline was dramatically different from the rocky shores we were used to seeing.

Closed campgrounds are certainly quiet and peaceful. The lack of water and washrooms is easy to prepare for, and we always maintained our supply of water, food and toilet paper in case we came upon a nice place. We slept twelve hours that night, shook the frost off our tent in the morning, packed up and went to the general store in Cowhead to freshen up and buy supplies.

Gros Morne Park was a highlight of our trip down the west coast of Newfoundland. Though we often saw squirrels and birds before the park, it wasn't until entering Gros Morne that we saw snails, butterflies, jack rabbits, foxes and moose.

Halfway through Gros Morne there is an appropriately named town of Rocky Harbour. On our way to the Juniper Campground/hostel, we made a hasty detour when we spotted a roadside pizza place. We rode up to the building and dismounted, almost throwing our bikes against the wall to park them. Inside we were greeted by the owner and we returned his smile, not by saying hello but saying 'feed us.'

Maureen and I each ordered and ate large pizzas. It felt great being full of food for the first time in a week. We hung around and chatted with the proprietor for a short while, mostly thanking him for being there, and then headed for the campground. Though I usually do the laundry, and Maureen the groceries, we

swapped jobs for the day. Maureen was hurting from another long day in the wind, so while she did laundry, I rode down, down, down into town to buy groceries.

When I returned with panniers full of groceries, Maureen, groggy with sleep, was barely able to walk. She had taken a hot shower and spent the rest of the time in a small warm laundry room being lulled to sleep by the rhythms of the washers and dryers. It was another early night and long sleep on the west coast of Newfoundland.

Along the coast we encountered headwinds for all but one day. We rode between thirty and eighty kilometres per day, staying in welcoming toasty warm motels or frosty cold campgrounds which weren't open for the season yet. Generally we didn't have much rain, but the temperatures remained low and we had morning frost on our tent until after Gros Morne Park.

There were some amazing changes in scenery along the way. Up north the shoreline was very rocky, there were trees, but they were small, and there wasn't a lot of green shrubbery. Slowly the undergrowth filled in and, by Gros Morne, the forests were lush and green like BC. Beginning as a rocky beach, the shore became sandy and abundant with tall grasses.

The Table Mountains of Gros Morne Park jutted up from marshland on our left as we rode south. These mountains were formed when two continental plates met; one plate went under the other and lifted the other plate to create steep cliffs and flat topped mountains. We had planned to spend a day hiking in the mountains, so I packed a harness that adapted my panniers to a back pack. At the park interpretation centre we learned the highlands were closed due to ptarmigan mating season. As it was, we were quite a few days behind where we wanted to be, so we admired the mountains as we rode beside them. They gave us a much-needed homey feel.

Deer Lake sticks in our minds because it had a Tim Hortons Donuts and they had sandwiches with lettuce, tomato and many other things that dreams are made of. I now understand how sharks can, after getting a whiff of blood in the water, go into a feeding frenzy. We ordered way more food than we could eat but, unlike sharks, we could carry leftovers.

In Pasadena, on Deer Lake, we stopped at an Irving gas station for a bathroom break. Maureen was approached by two young women who inquired where Maureen was staying that night. When I returned from the washroom, Maureen introduced me to Andrea and Paige. Andrea invited us to camp in the backyard of her parents' house.

We followed them a few blocks to a street and entered a yard with a huge back lawn of grass and birch trees. Large lilac trees in full bloom filled the air with their wonderful smell. After setting up the tent, I sat on the back porch of the house and marvelled at how we were allowed to stay in this lovely setting. Birds were chirping, cats were roaming the underbrush, and swallow-tail butterflies floated between flowers in the garden and the lilac trees. We had found a little part of heaven.

We spent the evening indoors with Paige, Andrea and her parents talking about Newfoundland. Andrea's father prepared a fine supper of cod fishcakes and boiled peas. We had a lively discussion about ketchup: should it be spread on everything? Paige thought not; Maureen and I agreed with her for the most part. Ketchup was okay on fishcakes but not on peas.

That evening we learned of another local delicacy. We had already heard of boiled salt beef and a number of stomach twisting tales of what Newfoundlanders can do to food, but we hadn't heard that molasses and butter on freshly baked bread was a delicacy. A large container of molasses on the kitchen counter attested to the fact that they used it more than we did.

At home we had used molasses in the baking of bran muffins, but a half litre of Crosby's molasses could last years. Before we left BC we threw out our molasses, instead of giving it away, because we didn't know how old it was anymore.

Paige, a native of Ontario, met Andrea at University of Guelph, where they both studied zoology. Andrea's father, a retired biologist, was also a beekeeper. When we met them, Andrea and Paige were in the process of determining whether they could turn their mutual interest in bee keeping into a business.

Due to a parasite which was affecting the health of many bees throughout the world, importing and exporting queen bees was severely restricted but they were going to try it. Newfoundland bees seemed to be doing well, but it sounded like a lot of hives and open fields were needed to make a living selling honey. It didn't sound like an easy business to be in, but when industry and resources were drying up, how else could people make money than by turning their hobbies and interests into jobs? A return to how it used to be before large farms and factories.

The next morning we left Pasadena heading for Corner Brook. On the way out of town we noticed that the campground we had planned to stay in was no more. Andrea and Paige had come to the rescue, and we hadn't even known it.

Corner Brook is only about twenty-five kilometres from Pasadena, but we stayed there because it was raining and cold. Maureen was getting very tired too. Weary tired she calls it. We had photos developed at a local shopping mall, and she could barely stay awake to look at them. We decided to take a motel for the night, and Maureen went to bed right away and fell asleep.

On our second last day in Newfoundland we rode sixty-five kilometres to Barachois Provincial Park. A very nice setting for a park, but the black flies were out in full force. We killed hundreds of them between the two of us; still they kept on coming.

In the late afternoon of our last day in Newfoundland, we entered the Hungry Bear Restaurant for supper and advice about where to camp. The restaurant is about one hundred kilometres from Port aux Basques on the Trans Canada Highway. On the memo board, by the door, was posted an ad for the Port auxBasque to Corner Brook shuttle service. Should we or shouldn't we?

We had ridden sixty kilometres since Barachois, which was an incredible effort considering Maureen's state of fatigue. Twelve months earlier she could not have ridden her bike even a half hour without being exhausted. She was doing pretty well despite the wind, weather and mixed-up diet. She had trained for the trip, but the wind and weather had been more than expected. Before we left home we agreed

that Maureen would set the daily pace so she could build up her strength as the trip progressed, but she was getting exhausted from not recovering fully.

Maureen began to apologise each night for not being able to ride further or faster, or end the day friendlier. After twelve days it was too much for us both. I doubt anyone would watch his or her spouse suffer all day, everyday, and find that fun. She wasn't enjoying herself or the scenery and, because of that, neither was I.

Maureen called for the shuttle to pick us up. The shuttle took us directly to the ferry terminal, where we arranged our passage for the next morning. We booked a B&B for the night and rode into town to do a little shopping.

At Port aux Basques there is a choice of two ferry departures. The fast boat, 6 hour crossing, leaves in the morning, the slow boat, 8-hour crossing, leaves late at night. You can save money by crossing at night but you have to weigh how valuable your sleep time is, whether you can sleep or if you'll be awake through the night sea sick, how much a berth costs, and how awake you have to be on the other side. We decided to go during the day, find a camp spot in North Sydney and then start riding across Cape Breton the following day.

As we rested in bed the night before leaving Newfoundland, we both felt it hard to believe we had been riding only twelve days. The days were so long, and sometimes the challenges were formidable; it felt like we had been riding for weeks and weeks. St. Anthony, we both agreed, seemed like a lifetime ago.

We had only one major uphill challenge, but it made us decide that the Cabot Trail, in Cape Breton, would be out of the question. On the morning we approached Gros Morne we could see a steep hill up ahead. It turned out to be so steep that, when we got to it, Maureen could only ride fifty metres at a time before having to stop and rest.

Along the west coast of Newfoundland it was difficult to find a store that carried fresh bread and/or vegetables. The stores are small and mostly stocked with canned goods. Forget bulk pasta, unconverted rice and granola bars. We ate pudding cups, chocolate bars and 'just add water' rice or pasta mixes.

Though food prices were mostly reasonable, there were times when we were taken advantage of. In Plum Point, desperate for a sandwich, we went to a motel restaurant and asked to buy some bread. They sold us some, and it turned out to be very good bread, but it cost \$3.50 for eight slices. Wiltondale, on the south end of Gros Morne Park, had cottages, convenience store and a restaurant, but no groceries. We stayed at the cottages, which were nice, but ended up paying \$13 a plate for mediocre food at the restaurant.

Of all the places across Canada, this was the only stretch of road where packing a week's worth of dehydrated food would have been a good idea.

Leaving Newfoundland we were four days behind our tentative schedule and didn't want to get further behind. We also wanted a few days of easy riding, so riding the Cabot Trail, known for its steep hills, was out of the question. We decided to cross Cape Breton heading for Prince Edward Island and, once there, try to get to Ille d'Magdeline if we had time. We wanted to ride across PEI, cross the Confederation Bridge into New Brunswick and, depending how much time we had, decide if we needed the bus or train to get to Halifax in time to meet with Val and Alex. Luck and planning were required.

Planning is easy; all you need is a good map and hindsight.

Chapter 3.

Preparation and Planning

A Psycho-physicist might say, 'For every particle of luck in the universe, there is a particle of anti-luck. Therefore, where luck and anti-luck collide – annihilation occurs.'

Applied to planning, whole travel plans are known to have exploded at the sudden appearance of anti-luck, so don't let the success of your adventures depend on planning every detail before departure. Casting plans in stone might feel good, but they're hard to lug around. Besides, fool-proof plans don't exist because plans inevitably reflect our personality. They are as perfect as we are. Grandiose or small

scale, plans should reflect reality by allowing for a little chaos. Build a few days or hours into your plans to recover baggage or get over jet lag, to explore avenues whimsically or by bus.

The trick to planning a route, like anything else, is knowing when you've done enough. As with inflating a tire with a hand pump, at first everything fills out nicely, but at some point between beginning and an explosion, it's time to go with what you have. Also consider that the most adventurous parts of trips are the unexpected people, places or events you cannot plan.

We planned our cross-Canada route by gathering information from Provincial tourist bureaux, reading books, visiting websites and talking to friends.

Tourism BC gave us the toll-free phone numbers for all the other provinces. All the Provincial tourist bureaux sent maps, campground and accommodation guides and calendars of special events. It took weeks to agree what to see and, when selecting roads, what to avoid.

We read two books about cycling across Canada. *'Cycling Canada'* by John M. Smith and *'The Complete Guide to Bicycling in Canada'* by Elliott Katz. The latter contains excellent advice about routes and equipment.

We found many excellent websites with up-to-date information on routes. We also sought route advice from friends who had ridden across Canada and from friends who had lived in eastern Canada.

Considering all the information and advice we had gathered, we chose a few points of interest in each province and then the routes that would take us to those places without retracing our route and by staying off the major highways whenever possible. Against advice from all over, we decided to travel from east to west, against the wind, so we could enjoy a leisurely seven weeks in the Maritimes before heading home. The only pressing things on our schedule were to be in Halifax by June's end and to make it through the Rockies before late September. We had a rough idea about Quèbec, Ontario and the Prairies but left route planning until we got closer. That's it: reductionist route planning. Next we dealt with the implications and options of our route plan.

Neither of us had been to the east coast before and both wanted to see St. John's. Agreement is an excellent way to begin trip planning. I was interested in seeing the Viking settlement and not interested in riding the interior of the province, which had been described to us as '600K of moose and trees.' We estimated it would be a two-week ride from St. John's to L'Anse aux Meadows. Other options included flying, catching a ferry from Lewisporte, taking a bus, or some other ground transport. When Maureen suggested flying to St. Anthony and L'Anse aux Meadows as soon as it was open, we knew, right away, it was the best fit for our plans. All we needed was a start date.

The interpretative centre at L'Anse aux Meadows usually opens in mid-June but, because of Soiree '99 celebrating Newfoundland's 50th year in Canada, it opened on June 2 that year.

Checking flight schedules and prices, we decided to spend five days in St. John's to see the sights, recover from jet lag, and just unwind. We booked a downtown B&B recommended to us by friends and went to a travel agent to book our flights. That is how it all began.

As we rode into different provinces we picked up new maps and accommodation guides and recycled or sent home maps we no longer needed. Stopping at information booths, we discovered that many wonderful municipal campgrounds were not listed in the provincial guides. A revised ferry schedule, at one info booth, alerted us to find an alternate route. Without that advice we would have ridden two days and then had to double back.

Alternate routes, and shuttle services, turned out to be very important. Our plan implied we'd average 400 kilometres, per week, riding six days. However, due to headwinds in the first month, we only managed an average of 250 per week. To get to Halifax by late June we had to take advantage of a few shuttle services.

As we crossed the country, we kept our friends and family updated by phone, website and email. In August our friends Terry and Linda emailed that they would rent a RV and meet us in Banff if we could be there around September 11. We thought that would be great, so we planned our route to meet them.

Though our cross-Canada trip plans were very flexible, our previous cycling vacations haven't been so flexible. In the past, we too had felt the inflexibility and limitations of squeezing bike trips into one- or two-week annual vacations. We too had arrived home, after two weeks, and had had enough of each other.

Attitude and camaraderie becomes more important on longer trips. Getting along with each other becomes tougher as the trip becomes longer. Route planning for long trips isn't tremendously different from that for short trips, it just takes longer. The real difference between long and short trips is the emotional planning and preparations that must also be made.

To get the most from your extended trip, an emotional plan is needed as well. I would recommend consciously deciding to have evening chats, or all day long as you ride, to express your feelings about the trip. People riding together might exchange diaries or, if that is too personal, read excerpts aloud which may help your partners understand you.

It is helpful to agree before hand that these sessions are, and will be, necessary for you to make it through your trip on friendly terms. Make ground rules, before you need them, about respecting your partners' opinions and abilities. Monitor your feelings and discuss them when it is appropriate, not when you suddenly feel like it. You may have to re-plan your emotional route, as we did, when you discover there is something amiss.

I tend to express myself in writing and Maureen is a talker. During our trip, Maureen always read my trip diary and I, in turn, listened to her talk all day. That usually worked out well, except the time I wrote in my diary that she was snivelling. She read my diary and stopped snivelling, and began hiding her pain, anguish, saddle sores and all her other concerns to the point where I wrote she was having a great time. She wasn't and she told me so in no uncertain terms.

Travelling with a spouse is no easier than with a friend. Respect for your trip partners goes a long way. My statement about snivelling was disrespectful and said more about my emotional well being than Maureen's. I heard her, but I wasn't listening to what she was saying.

In Cape Breton we had adopted a new attitude. We began with a *go there and do that* attitude but we found that *doing* tourist stuff wasn't always possible, nor did it suit us, and it made us feel like we were missing out on a lot.

Our new day to day attitude became *we can't see it all or do it all, so let's be happy with whatever comes our way*. This attitude served us well, on a daily basis, for most of the trip. It helped us enjoy every moment of riding and eased our feelings about missing sites we had planned to visit along the way.

The new daily attitude worked well, but it was incompatible with my overall desire to cross the country. It is hard to relax and take it easy while trying to get going and back on schedule. When I expressed my opinion about when, where and how far for the day, I was inadvertently pressuring Maureen to keep up or shut up. I was making poor decisions about Maureen's needs and, in New Brunswick, it was obvious my conflicting attitudes were alienating us and might have prevented us from riding across the country together. I needed to adopt our daily attitude as my trip attitude.

A good attitude is a wonderful thing. Many people who weren't exceptional athletes or owners of the finest equipment have completed epic journeys due to their attitude. Before multi-gear bikes were invented or roads were paved, cyclists rode huge heavy Penny Farthing bicycles across the country. Since then, a lot of people have suffered their way across Canada with great determination.

Quite frankly, suffering is for fanatics. We didn't drop out of the rat race to become laboratory test animals for muscle relaxants and fluvoxamine. We wanted to have fun riding across Canada, not get divorced because of the experience. We wanted time away to talk, enjoy life and figure out what to do next. We did not want go crazy like the rest of the world seemed to be doing.

Elsewhere in the world, NATO was bombing Kosovo, students were shooting each other in Taber, both Eaton's and Wayne Gretzky were calling it quits, and Microsoft was releasing yet another version of Windows. So, we always had lots to talk about.

Philosophy comes naturally when you've spoken all you can about the weather.

Chapter 4.

Cape Breton, Late June 1999.

We should have rented a car in North Sydney. It seems so logical now, but it didn't occur to us then.

There were four places we wanted to visit in Cape Breton.

Actually, there were only three places we both wanted to visit and a fourth, if we had time, that Maureen wanted to see. We could agree that the Cabot trail was worth riding and that Glace Bay and the fort at Louisbourg would be great. However, I wasn't in a rush to see Rita MacNeil's Teahouse in Big Pond.

And so it came to pass, one rainy morning in Big Pond, Nova Scotia, with the knowledge I would not be seeing the Cabot Trail, Glace Bay or Louisbourg, we pulled into Rita's' Teahouse for breakfast.

I had seen Rita in concert at the Queen E in Vancouver and when she performed at Expo 86. Her concerts are okay, but let me clarify the musical situation between Maureen and me. If we were approaching the Taflemusik Coffee Haus or the Renaissance Restaurant I'd be all smiles. Anyway, I doubted I could get a good cup of coffee at a teahouse.

I was wrong. It was one of the nicest places we'd been for a long time. The staff were friendly, the food was okay, and the music was kept low. The inside was decorated with Ritabilia: there was a rather tasteful Room of Fame which housed recording awards, honorary degrees and pictures of her family. I say tasteful because, with great humility, a very Canadian trait, the family photos were mostly hung at eye level, and if you wanted to see awards, you had to peruse the lower parts of the room. The message seemed to be 'this is who I am' at the eye level and 'this is what I've done,' as a consequence. The room would be still very interesting even if the awards weren't there.

Maureen, who reads the lyrics of Rita's songs, has read books and articles about her, looked through the Room of Fame and felt her good opinion of Rita, the person, was confirmed.

Most of us struggle with the separation of being and doing at some point in our lives. Anyone who gets laid off as much as I do gets plenty of opportunity to wonder: is it me or is it the work that I'm (not) doing? Is it my Being or Doing that just got fired?

Rita seems to have figured out what is important to her. I was pleasantly surprised by what I found there. Rita's philosophy of success, it seemed to us, was to acknowledge her family first, followed by a humble admittance that her voice is appreciated by millions of fans. Maureen recalls the teahouse as one of the best places we visited.

We were two weeks into our journey on the cool and rainy afternoon we rode into Antigonish. Maureen had been uncomfortable in the saddle for a few days and yearned for a day off the bikes. We were also yearning for a few West Coast luxuries we had taken for granted. Latte's, espressos, cappuccinos, croissants, biscotti and a smoke-free setting.

Spoiled Vancouver Brats Travel Atlantic Canada - Live For Days Without A Latté!!!

Once we entered Nova Scotia, the selection at grocery stores greatly improved. Our wish for fresh pasta had come true, and now our desires went on to other things. Near Antigonish we found a speciality coffee shop and indulged in lattés and baked goods.

What decadence! What luxury! Why doesn't every town have one of these places?

Tummy full, buzzed on caffeine, and drying off in comfort, I contemplated why I momentarily felt guilty about enjoying a muffin and coffee. I wondered if I would be able to give up the expensive lifestyle when we got home.

To set my mind at ease, I supposed many travellers have this feeling when partaking of some luxury or ritual, which, while making them feel at ease, also reminds them of their habits and home.

I believe we seek situations that produce a sense of order when all around is chaotic. The coffee shop brought a sense of order, familiarity and comfort. Even though the stress of being on the road lessened with each week, we were still adapting to our trip by developing and maintaining comforting routines.

On a typical day I got up an hour or so before Maureen to make coffee. Making coffee involves boiling water and pouring it over a cone filter of dark roast ground beans. While waiting for the water to boil, I listened to the radio, ate breakfast and wrote in my journal. Maureen is a little slower to wake than I and cannot eat much first thing in the morning. Every morning I passed a cup of coffee and a granola bar to her in the tent. She would take some time to write in her journal and then packed up the inside of the tent. When she came out we packed up tent and did the tarp dance with the ground sheet.

The tarp dance involves two people folding a tarp. Facing each other holding the ground sheet of the tent, we shook the debris off the moist plastic and folded it twice lengthwise. To fold it further, we would take a step toward each other and kiss. Maureen would grab the ends I was holding and I would bend down and bring the bottom up to her fingers, kiss, and bring the bottom up once again. We would kiss again and I walked away with a folded tarp to put on my bike. Adding a gratuitous bow or curtsy was always welcome before or after the dance, especially if we knew other campers were watching.

It usually took two hours before we were ready to leave. With few exceptions, Maureen rode in front. There is nothing worse than spending the whole day catching up to your riding partner instead of sight seeing at your own pace. So, Maureen had the maps, set our daily route and the pace. When I was in front, it was usually so she could draft or we were on a long incline.

Usually, within ten kilometres of starting out, Maureen needed another granola bar or whatever we were currently carrying. After thirty or forty kilometres we had to find a place to eat our second breakfast or first lunch. Whatever you call it, we ate four meals a day; supper was usually the only meal cooked up on the stove. If

at all possible, one of our meal stops was at a grocery store where we would also decide what to eat for supper.

We always kept one emergency supper dried pasta mix packed in our bags. We ate a variety of one pot meals, pasta dishes, fajitas or anything and everything with fresh vegetables.

A favourite one pot pasta dish involved a pot of boiling water, a short pasta, which could be eaten with a spoon, and a pre-made bagged sauce that could be warmed in the boiling water while the pasta cooked. I would drain the water, dump the pasta in a bowl-plate, and cover it with the frying pan lid of the pot. Returning the now empty pot to the heat, I usually threw in a small package of butter, salvaged from a gas station or restaurant visit, and then added vegetables we had chopped while waiting for the pasta water to boil. I stir fried the vegetables for about two minutes, not wanting to kill all those nutrients, added the warmed sauce and then the pasta. I always divided the food evenly, unless I thought I could get away with keeping more for myself, and then served with fresh bread. Yummy. While we ate we usually had the kettle on to warm water for dishes. I always ate out of the pot, rinsed it out when I was done, and used it as the sink to do dishes. Cutlery, one plate and the pot were all we had to wash up on most nights.

We enjoyed stopping for larger lunches of omelettes or pancakes and, in the afternoon, it was a real treat to find a coffee shop where we could relax, reflect upon our trip and perhaps philosophise about our cycling trip so far. I call that Velosophy and, on that day in Antigonish, I was thinking about wheels.

Radiating out from the centre, spokes are the true strength of wheels. These tiny tendrils, when tensioned and balanced properly, make it seem like the rim is doing all the work. Spokes have inspired many a cyclist/philosopher (velosopher?) to compare the simple complexity of well-balanced wheels with life, love, friends and fortunes.

When contemplating wheels, I think of the tremendous stresses excess baggage causes. I think of how delicate wheels are in directions other than straight. I think about how, even with normal use, spoke wheels readily return to their

component parts and how properly maintained wheels last a long time, but everything in the universe deteriorates. Everything. Contemplating wheels is like contemplating a lot of things. Seasons and relationships usually come to mind.

The rear wheel of Maureen's bike stopped us three times. It was a good lesson of what you can prepare for and what you have to be ready to deal with. The first two breakdowns created an environment of unaccountable generosity, the last was just an annoyance.

The good feeling inside the coffee shop in Antigonish was quite a contrast to my mood a half-hour later. We made our way to the tourist information booth in Antigonish to inquire about camping and the ferry from Pictou to Prince Edward Island.

Maureen had complained for a few days that her bike was wobbling more and more all the time. I could see her wheel had a warp, but I had no idea what sort of problem we would have. While Maureen made her inquiries I examined her rear wheel and discovered a lot of very loose spokes. I went to the tourist booth and asked if there were any bike shops around. They gave me the Yellow Pages for the area, and I made note of their addresses. Then I told Maureen that her rear wheel had some very loose spokes and we may have to go somewhere to get it tensioned if I couldn't fix it myself.

At that point in our travels we were considering some options. In nine days we had to be in Halifax to meet Val and Alex. Together the four of us planned to ride the East Coast of Nova Scotia south of Halifax. How, being in Antigonish, would we be able to see PEI and still make it to Halifax?

All things considered, we decided it would be best to see a little of PEI even if it meant only seeing the bit between Wood Island, where the ferry lands, and Summerside, where the Confederation Bridge connects to the mainland. If we could get a shuttle to Pictou, NS, 100km from Antigonish, we would have at least one more day on the island.

The tourist info attendants in Antigonish had paged a shuttle company and were waiting for a return call when I informed Maureen her bike was in trouble.

Instead of returning his page, the driver showed up at the info booth expecting to take a load of people to Halifax.

Not upset there were only the two of us, and that we were heading for PEI instead of his usual route, we quickly packed all our stuff in his van and took off. These events all occurred so quickly that we didn't have a chance to make sure we had enough cash to pay for the shuttle, the ferry, camping fees and food.

Our driver was quite a pleasant man and had a little to say about the area we were driving through. He was happy to take us out to Pictou because he'd be able to visit one of his daughters after he dropped us off.

After paying for the shuttle service, reserving money for the ferry and estimating how much a campsite would be, we were able to purchase some food and drink at the ferry terminal. The day had become quite warm, and the view across to PEI was beautiful. Unfortunately I had no time to appreciate the view. As soon as we unloaded the van I carried Maureen's bike up the steps of the ferry terminal and into the shade of the open-air lobby. I flipped the bike upside down and positioned the wheel so I could easily identify and tighten the spokes.

Repairing bicycles is something I usually enjoy. The one thing I don't have much experience in, or patience for, is truing wheels. Add hunger and heat to my dislike for truing, and the mood is set for a bad time.

Go slow, I told myself, just a quarter turn on a spoke nipple at a time. I spun the wheel and located two big wobbles. I began to adjust the spoke tension, loosen, tighten, loosen, and tighten. On to the next big warp, loosen, tighten, loosen, and tighten. The wheel was getting worse, and my hands were getting filthy from a month of accumulated dirt.

I went to the washroom and got some wet paper towels to clean up the wheel. Upon cleaning the wheels I discovered the cracks. Cracks like I'd never seen before. Cracks as wide as despair and as deep as pocket books. The spoke nipples were coming through the eyelet holes in two places, and the rim was cracked and separating at the side in three other places. No wonder it was getting worse while I tried to true it. The spokes I loosened stayed loose because the spokes I tightened got

looser too. It looked bad and spun even worse. It wobbled so much I had to remove the brakes so the wheel would turn.

It was a lovely day for the two-hour ferry ride to Wood Island PEI. As the ferry approached the distinctive red soil cliffs, we began scanning the shoreline for campsites. We won't get far with wobble wheel, I kept thinking.

We disembarked, headed straight for the tourist booth and cued up for our turn to ask tourist questions. Can we camp beside the ferry terminal? No. Is there a bank machine nearby? No. Grocery store? Bike shop? Shuttle to Charlottetown? No, no, no. May I borrow a telephone book and phone to call bike shops? Yes, but, being 6 p.m., all the bike shops were closed. Where is the nearest campground? Just 4 kilometres away. Whew! We could walk if we had to. Maureen and I went back to our bicycles.

As we discussed what to do next, a young woman approached, pardoned herself for overhearing our conversation with the tourist attendant, and asked if we needed some food. 'Would you like some macaroni and cheese?' she offered, explaining that she and her father had been camping by car and, because of the inclement weather, had eaten at restaurants instead of from the supply in their car.

We followed her to her car, met her father and accepted a package of macaroni and cheese, two cans of ice tea, crackers and bread. We couldn't thank them enough. I felt like their generosity, and our need, was culturally embarrassing. We hadn't made a fuss at the tourist bureau but they tuned into our needs. Once again it was as if our needs radiated from our bodies and our signals were answered with generosity.

We packed the food in our panniers and rode to Northumberland Provincial Park where, thankfully, we were able to pay with a debit card directly from our checking account. We now had pocket money, because it was no longer reserved for camping fees, and we had food. Except for Maureen's bike, things were looking pretty good.

A flat is just a flat,

But a broken wheel is a big deal.

Chapter 5.

Busted - Fathers Day, Sunday June 21, 1999

I was all arranged. Bob, who had also broken a wheel, had phoned his father and asked to be picked up Sunday morning. Maureen would ride with them, taking her bike and all our camping equipment, and be dropped off at Joan and Bryson's house in Charlottetown. All Maureen had to do was enjoy the drive into town, introduce herself to Joan and Bryson's son Ian and his wife Ellen, make herself at home, do laundry or take it easy, whatever she wanted. To Maureen's look of concern Joan added, "It's okay, we do this all the time."

With Maureen's rear wheel wobbling and unable to use her rear brakes, we arrived at the campground. While paying the campground fees, Maureen explained to the park attendant that her wheel had broken and that doesn't happen often. The attendant responded that there was a cyclist, part of a group down by the water, who also arrived with a broken wheel.

Down by the water we found our campsite and, a few sites a way, a number of tents and bicycles, obviously belonging to the cycling group. Though there wasn't a group in sight, there was a woman hanging a dishtowel on the frame of her tandem. We complimented her on her bike and especially the excellent panniers attached to it.

The panniers were large and had many detachable pouches unlike anything we had seen. We chatted a bit and explained our wheel situation. Our new friend Joan suggested we go to the cook shelter and talk to her husband. Bryson, she explained, used to own the bike shop in Charlottetown and would certainly know what to do.

Over at the cook shack we introduced ourselves to Bryson and the rest of the PEI cycling club. The ten of us chatted through the night as Maureen and I prepared our supper, and shared their campfire, late into the night.

With some hilarity the PEI cycling club members pointed out that we were the physical presence of the Mountain Equipment Co-op catalogue. Jerseys and shorts, jackets, tents, sleeping bags, panniers, on and on throughout the catalogue. Our opinions were asked for, notes were made, material was inspected between knowing fingers and equipment was inspected with critical eyes.

Joan and Bryson, understanding our plight, had invited us to stay at least one night in the guest room of their Charlottetown home so we could figure out, on Monday, what to do about Maureen's cracked back wheel.

It was a pleasant sixty kilometre ride from Northumberland Provincial Park to Charlottetown. The weather was fair, and summer was in the air. The rolling hay fields by the water and potato fields up on the slopes were more delightful with new friends providing local history as we rode.

It was an easy ride for me, because for the first time in three weeks of riding, I was riding without camping gear. I rode with all eight members of the PEI Cycling Club in turn, getting to know them better, sharing a few laughs and stories of places to bicycle. We stopped at their usual spot for lunch and, further down the road, their favourite place for ice cream. They made me feel as if I was travelling with long lost friends.

In "town" as they refer to Charlottetown, we did a little riding tour of the main street and historical buildings. As we rode along, each of the members, in turn, waved goodbye and went this or her own way. In the end, Joan and Bryson (on their tandem) and I were the only ones left. As we approached their house I noticed the lack of fences between houses. They say that good fences make good neighbours but, as Bryson explained to me, no fences make great friends.

Maureen came to the door and welcomed us home. She had been enjoying the sunny day relaxing in the back yard. Ian had greeted her as well as a person can welcome a stranger who gets them out of bed on a Sunday morning. We met the dog,

settled in and spent the evening talking about bikes, jobs, touring, things we'd done and things yet to do. It was a family reunion of sorts.

If cyclists got together and talked only about cycling-related subjects, it would soon get quite boring. There are two great things about an association of cyclists, the common bond of cycling and the variety of interesting people who cycle. Throughout our stay with Joan and Bryson we shared our lives, not just our love for cycling.

Bryson, retired and loving it, kept himself busy with a little household puttering and, in the summer, putting together bikes at the local Canadian Tire. Formerly employed by the federal government, formerly a co-owner of a bike shop and now wonderfully at ease to do as he pleases, I found him fatherly and friendly, which are two qualities I am sure he can't shake.

Joan was just a hoot. Never searching for words, Maureen and I were soon caught up with the life and times of everyone in the household. Soon to retire from administrative duties at another federal government department, Joan filled her life with riding in the summer and singing barbershop the rest of the year.

Bryson took charge of arranging the wheel repair and, on Monday morning, we got the prognosis from an up and coming wheel builder in town. Parts had to be ordered; they wouldn't be in until Wednesday or Thursday, and by Friday we'd have the wheel for sure. Accepting our fate, our thoughts turned to getting to Halifax by the next Monday. We wouldn't be riding the 400+ kilometres on the weekend, that was for sure.

Maureen called the three shuttle companies listed in the phone book. The first two wanted nothing to do with bicycles, and the third hesitantly agreed to transport us from Charlottetown to Halifax on the following Sunday morning. That settled, we wondered what to do in the mean time.

We borrowed Bryson's car for one day and had such a great day trip we decided to rent a car to go camping for a few nights and return to Charlottetown the following Saturday afternoon. The next eight days, staying with Joan and Bryson,

and touring PEI by car, turned out to be some of the highlights of the whole trip. I am sure I have never met with such generosity in my life.

I agreed to go to Cavendish and visit the Anne of Green Gables House and the Lucy Maud Montgomery museum because, I began to realise, not all tourist attractions were as boring as they sounded. I knew nothing of Montgomery, or her writings, before that visit but I left fascinated by the inspiration she had caused in readership and tourist authorities.

My cynicism of “must see” activities, where commercial success is determined by advertising dollar – regardless of content – cast a shadow over a few tourist activities. In Cape Breton a week earlier, and in PEI a week later, I had a surprisingly good time at “Tourist Traps.”

The tourist info about PEI red sandy beaches and parks was accurate. The best place we found to enjoy sun, surf and sand was Jacques Cartier Provincial Park on the east side of the north west tip of the island.

On the first afternoon at Jacques Cartier Provincial Park, Maureen and I took off our sandals and walked, hand in hand, into the cool salt water. The quietly lapping waves washed red sand over our feet and tried to take it back from under our heels. We stood there laughing until one of us lost our balance. The afternoon sun warmed our backs; in front of us the ocean met the cloudless sky and, in the water, gulls and debris floated lazily by. Behind us, on land, only robins seemed interested in doing anything.

Paradise found. We walked the beach, read and caught up in our trip diaries. The breeze off the water kept the biting bugs at bay and created a mini amphitheatre out of the tarp we had strung over the picnic table for shade. For the first time, we slept without the fly on the tent and, because of that, saw two beautiful sunrises over the ocean.

We spent two nights at Jacques Cartier Provincial Park but could easily have stayed longer. There are laundry facilities but no stores close by. On Friday, lacking food for another day, we began car touring once more.

We drove to North Cape at the north end of the island where the red cliffs are much larger and more rugged than elsewhere. We drove for hundreds of kilometres and saw beaches, hay fields, potato fields and a few lighthouses.

Not far from North Cape, in the quiet and quaint steeple church town of Tignish, we found a section of the Confederation Trail we had hoped to ride. The Confederation Trail is a converted rail bed that crosses PEI east to west and is part of the larger Trans Canada Trail system. The section in Tignish was loose-packed gravel and would not have been enjoyable with our thin tires. Definitely better for mountain bikes.

Looking for a campground for the night, we went south to Sand Dunes Provincial Park, but it looked too hot and dry; it also smelled of roasted seaweed. Our day of car touring ended about mid-island at Cabot Park.

The sunset was beautiful at Cabot Park. The campground is a sprawling lawn on a cliff high above the water. The view, out to the setting sun, included the north-west part of the island which arches out from left to right. Red at the best of times, during sunset the ground is bathed in the crimson light creating, a dark red-black landscape.

Like the other PEI parks we visited, the washrooms were large and clean and, if you needed shade during the day, you needed to bring a tarp. There were no stores around so campers had to bring food. Nice as this park was, our favourite place was Jacques Cartier Provincial Park. Maureen said our first two nights car camping were like a vacation from the previous three weeks of riding.

On our last full day in PEI we went to Summerside and the Highland Gathering. Maureen thought it would be fun, but I wasn't so sure I'd enjoy a mass band of bagpipes and an afternoon of Highland Fling competition.

The Highland Gathering was an educational experience. I learned the Highland Fling is always the same, and competition is all about how well a dancer performs the steps. It sounds so obvious now! I also learned that there is a technique in the rock throw. The strongest looking guy doesn't always win. The winner had a

certain finesse that I can only describe as coaxing the rock further. Certainly there is strength involved, but the twirl and trajectory amounts to balletic ballistics.

Interesting as I found it all, the most amazing part of the day was the opening ceremony massed bands comprised of hundreds of bagpipers, and some brass instruments, from all over Canada. Not an enthusiast of solo pipes, I have to admit the joint bands sounded fantastic, and I am really glad we were there for an interesting cultural experience.

Another cultural awakening was visiting the Acadian Museum at Miscouche. Watching the short film and walking through the displays, I got a better understanding of the Acadians culture of the Maritimes. Throughout PEI, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick Acadian flags were as common as Canadian flags. In the early 1600's an area known as Acadia (or Acadie) incorporated what is now Nova Scotia, PEI and parts of Québec, New Brunswick and Maine. By far the greatest concentration of Acadians were found along the Bay of Fundy and in an area now known as Annapolis Royal. As parts of North America were claimed and reclaimed by the British and the French, Acadians were often expelled from their homes, and some were shot or died at sea being transported elsewhere. Later, riding the Evangeline Trail in Nova Scotia and reading the epic poem Evangeline by Longfellow, we learned even more about Acadian History.

For Maureen, the broken wheel and subsequent week off the bike, could not have come at a better time. She had developed a serious rash between her legs and doubted being able to ride all the way to Halifax.

As we prepared for our trip and crossed Canada by bike, we were often amazed with the juxtaposition of our good and bad luck. So many times we found that what initially looked like bad news turned out to be good news. I am sure it was the brighter side of what looked like bad news that made the cross-Canada bike trip possible. With good luck and bad, in sickness and in health, with good planning and despite of it, we were able to cross Canada fourteen summers after we were married.

Back in Charlottetown, at Bryson and Joan's, Maureen tried out her new wheel by riding up and down the street. We felt hopeful, with her bike whole again,

that we could continue with our trip. Our relaxing stay in PEI was over, Maureen's rash had subsided, and we were ready to catch the shuttle to Halifax the next morning.

What would a trip across Canada be without a few coincidences occurring? Sitting around the table after supper, Joan was talking about days gone by. She mentioned that one of her middle names is Wardrop. Maureen and I stared at her in disbelief. Then Maureen explained that her mother's maiden name was Wardrop and that the Wardropes were having a family reunion in Penticton, BC, that weekend.

Maureen phoned her mother and a lively conversation ensued about relatives in Glasgow, Scotland. It was strange to discover Joan was a distant relative.

Bryson waited until we had settled back in the house before telling us the shuttle company had called, while we were camping, to say they wouldn't take us to Halifax. I thought he was kidding at first. Goodness knows what contortions my face went through as I contemplated what that meant. How would we get to Halifax? Should we, or should we plan something else? Shall we phone Val and Alex right now or wait?

"It's OK, though," Bryson said, "Joan and I are taking you to Halifax in our car." The bike rack was already on the car.

Halifax is a five-hour drive from Charlottetown. Bryson and Joan said they looked forward to taking us to Halifax and showing us the places they first met, danced and dated. Bryson was stationed in Halifax when Joan and her family immigrated to Halifax from Scotland in the 50's.

The next morning we had an early start from Charlottetown, crossing the Confederation Bridge into New Brunswick then over to Nova Scotia arriving in Halifax by early afternoon. Joan and Bryson showed us the waterfront and reminisced how it used to be when they first met in this city years ago. It was touching to see and hear them talk about where they first met, where they first kissed and where they went dancing. It sounded like the dances were quite important.

The four of us had a great time and hated for the afternoon to end but, with teary-eyed thank you's and much hugging, our fairy-tale week ended when our fairy godparents drove home to PEI.

The generosity we were shown in Newfoundland in St. John's, St. Anthony and Pasedena and then on PEI at the ferry terminal and by Joan and Bryson was beyond anything we had ever experienced. What had we done to deserve such generosity? How did we end up with such generous people? How could this keep happening? Is this luck, coincidence, synchronicity or is it a normal reaction to be so un-big-city like and help people in need?

We discovered, as we rode across Canada, that generosity was the heart of people in small of communities. We left home with a mixed-up big-city mentality about generosity. Having never experienced such generosity, we confused it with *pulling in favours* and therefore logically wondered, what had we done to deserve this?

The answer was nothing. We did nothing to deserve generosity, because generosity is given freely. We were used to the artificial world of work life and big city life where favours are traded throughout the work day to get things done. *You scratch my back and the itch will be gone thank you* is not a phrase bantered around the offices I've worked at.

I think it is natural to be generous, and I think it is possible that generosity may be an evolutionary trait to ensure societies survive. The happy feeling we get from performing a generous deed may have a neurochemical basis or it may be cultural training, like manners. Whatever the reason, wherever generosity is lacking, so is happiness.

Halifax is not lacking in tourist venues. There is much to see and do, and we were glad to have a day to see the old fort known as the Citadel, more of the waterfront, and also the marine museum. We returned to our B&B in the early afternoon to pack up, do laundry and rest before a week of riding with Val and Alex.

Val, Alex and I met on a cycling skills course in Vancouver. Experienced sailors and cyclists, when not living on their floating home they travelled around the

world where Val could attend medical conferences, deliver a research paper or practice her medical trade with the group Doctors Without Borders. They took their bikes wherever they went and toured as much as possible.

Alex was a self-employed carpenter who always found meaningful work in the third world nations where Val volunteered a month of each year. Alex's interest in woodwork and sailing made him an informative companion while we toured the East Coast fishing towns, shipbuilders, marine museums and heritage residences.

Val was born and raised in Newfoundland and can talk with such an accent the three of us were hard pressed to understand what she was saying. Val was also a randonneur cyclist often riding brevets, timed events from 200 to 600 kilometres, with the BC Randonneur Club. All that to say, Val can ride fast for hours and hours. Alex draws the line at around 100 kilometres per day.

Val and Alex met us out front of our Halifax B&B and we rode off to Peggy's Cove together. This was the first time Maureen's new wheel was under full camping load and, in retrospect, we should have tested longer in Charlottetown.

Maureen felt something was wrong with the wheel after about 15 kilometres. She stopped so Alex and I could look at the wheel but, with all the packs, we couldn't see much wrong. We made it to Peggy's Cove, but the wheel was so badly warped by then that Maureen had to walk the last kilometre into town.

Every single spoke was loose. Once again the wheel was useless and a confidant repair beyond my capabilities. Sitting at the Souwester Restaurant, heads over bowls of soup and hot coffee, we discussed the options and decided Maureen and I should go back to Halifax, probably by cab. How would we meet up again with Val and Alex?

Alex suggested we call the B&B in Lunenburg, where they were booked to stay the next night, because the NS accommodation guide says they have a full service bike shop.

I telephoned them, talked to Alfred in the bike shop, and confirmed he could build a wheel. Maureen got on the phone and talked to Merrill in the B&B and confirmed a room. Now all we had to do was figure out how to get there.

I figured that with the number of tourists at Peggy's Cove we'd be able to hitch a ride 100 km to Lunenburg. Maureen was still on the phone with Merrill when Alfred came on the line to say he'd pick us up, for a fee, if we could wait until about 2:30. You bet!

Val and Alex rode off, and we waited for Alfred to arrive in the Bike Barn Van. Alfred is a wiry seasoned cyclist who immediately set us at ease with his obvious love for all things bicycles. Road or dirt, recreational or racing, Alfred has tried it on bike. With lots in common to talk about, the trip to Lunenburg went really fast.

The Blue Rocks B&B is a husband and wife operation: Merrill runs the B&B, and Alfred runs the Lunenburg Bike Barn on the same property. Both American by birth, Merrill and Alfred moved to Blue Rocks shortly after Merrill fell in love with the area on vacation.

Without a doubt, Blue Rocks was my favourite B&B during the whole trip. Comfortable rooms, friendly people, lots of great books on the shelves, and the breakfasts were superb. One morning we began with a fresh strawberry purée, then some home-made granola and finished with French toast. What a way to start the day.

Alfred had a new wheel ready by noon of our second day. Just before we went for a test ride we met a retired couple who said they'd show us a beautiful route of back roads to Mahone Bay. Sharon and Mick guided us along some quaint winding roads sumptuously spaced with summer cottages set back on woody lots. Small boats were pulled up on the grey rocky shores to our right and, on our left, people waved lazily from lawn chairs. Even the activities of a few children were well suited to the quiet day that surrounded us.

As we entered Mahone Bay, Alex waved to us from the front of the Bagel Café. Maureen and I had coffee with Sharon and Mick then joined Val and Alex for a walking tour of Mahone Bay. We looked through the shops and checked the price of houses because we all agreed that Mahone Bay would be a lovely place to live if you didn't have to work for a living.

With our new knowledge of back roads, Maureen and I guided Val and Alex to the Blue Rocks B&B and introduced them to Alfred and Merrill. Once Val and Alex were settled in, the four of us walked into Lunenburg for supper. The previous night Maureen and I had walked into Lunenburg and dined at the Hillcroft Restaurant. Our meal had been so good, and the other menu items sounded so delicious that we were confident Val and Alex would enjoy it.

Alex loved his meal, but Val ordered Thai noodle soup, bit into a hot pepper and was too polite to spit it out. With no napkin handy, her face quickly indicated the colour of the pepper. She stubbornly swallowed the offending vegetable and sought comfort with a glass of water. Sinuses cleared, throat burning and eyes watering, the three of us watched and waited for signs of post-pepper life.

The next day, Canada Day, began a little rainy. We descended on Lunenburg by bike, visiting the museum, wharves and a few shops. Lunenburg, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, was established in 1753 and settled mostly by Germans, Swiss and some French. Alex, in carpenter mode, pointed out different architecture and influences as we toured the city.

The Blue Rocks B&B is closer to Lunenburg than the town of Blue Rocks. When the weather cleared, late in the afternoon on Canada Day, I rode out to Blue Rocks and found the shoreline was comprised largely of blue-grey rocks with some beige seaweed tide marks. There was no wind, so the quiet harbour waters reflected the sky, boat sides and docks, making the photos I took postcard perfect images of tranquillity.

In the evening we found a delightful restaurant in the Lion Inn up a few blocks from the Lunenburg main street. Down on the main street, restaurateurs were selling lobster at phenomenal prices, \$22 for the first pound, \$5 for each quarter pound afterwards. At the Lion Inn, Alex, Val and Maureen all added lobster to their meat or fish entrée at a reasonable price. My request for a vegetarian meal caused a little commotion. Had I called ahead, I was told, something could have been arranged. I ordered the salmon with rice.

The next day began wonderfully. As we made our way south along the coast from Lunenburg, we rode in and out of a cool fog, depending on how close the road was to the ocean. The clear warm air was filled with the fragrance of blooming wild roses and the foggy air filled with the smell of the ocean. The two smells merged and separated until we headed inland at East LaHave.

This day was the longest ride of our entire four months on the road, 125 kilometres. We had hoped to catch a cable ferry at East LaHave, but the cable had broken. Told there would be a minimum two-hour wait before repairs were complete, we rode further inland, to Bridgewater, then headed for West LaHave. Our detour took us three hours, including a break for lunch, and 30 km more riding than we set out to do that day. When we passed by the south end of the cable ferry, it was fixed and running without line-ups.

On our second last day riding with Val and Alex, we rode to Shelburne. Supporters of British rule settled Shelburne around 1755, during the American Revolution, and it became known as a United Empire Loyalist town. They play it up for tourists. There is a Loyalist Museum, a Dingy Shop, and summer students walking around in period costume of the 1700's.

We will remember Shelburne for a different reason. That night the four of us had the best meal of the whole trip at a restaurant called Charlottes Lane. The chowder was rich and creamy; fresh bread and good service were plentiful. We each had a different meal and raved we had chosen the best item on the menu.

Our last day travelling together brought us to separate accommodations. Maureen and I went to a campground and Val and Alex to a B&B on Cape Sable Island. Without planning to meet, we came across each other the next day and rode together until Arcadia. Val and Alex had to complete their loop back to Halifax through the Annapolis Valley and we were on our way to St. John, New Brunswick, via the Digby ferry.

It hardly felt like we had been riding with Val and Alex at all. They were the big event on our itinerary, and it ended so quickly. For the first month of our trip we had been keeping on schedule to meet them. With Val and Alex on their way,

Maureen and I, for the first time, were riding without a schedule. We didn't have to be anywhere but home before October.

The next day in Yarmouth we found a cosy little place on the main street for some soup. Yarmouth was one of the places I had hoped to see and explore. Their rich marine history is legend, but since it was raining, we were cold and we didn't have Alex around to help us with the significance of everything around us, we ate lunch and left.

We rode to camp at Darling Lake about 20 kilometres past Yarmouth. It was raining when we arrived and, since they don't have cook shelters, they offered to let us use the kitchen in their house. There isn't a store close by, so they asked what we needed and drove out to do our shopping. The skies cleared, so we cooked at our campsite with the smell of wild roses in our noses, on the shore of a darling lake filled with lily pads, little frogs and a hubbub of bird activity.

Oppositely, the next night in Digby we put our tent up on what used to be the parking lot of a waterslide attraction. It was hot, and there was no shade. No place to string a clothes line. The sand made all our belongings gritty; stinky gooey rail ties divided up the campsites and, because the campground is beside a busy road, I called it Jake-Brake Hill. It was noisy.

On the plus side, the site had a pool, laundry facilities and clean washrooms. The owner was a really nice guy, and it was an easy walk to town on the abandoned rail bed. However, in my opinion, a tourist should get a motel in Digby.

That is the problem with cycle camping. Campgrounds need to be far enough off the road so they are quiet and close enough so they don't add significantly to the daily journey. Every day we tried to determine where we would ride, where we could pick up food, how far the campground was off the main road, and whether or not it had showers? A dream campground is quiet, though the road is near, has lots of room so you can wave — not talk — to your neighbours, and has a cook shelter with hot and cold running water. It also has a laundromat, hot showers, a pool and a store near by.

There is, of course, no such thing. How could there be. If you build it, they will come... and make noise... and vandalise.

As we rode across the country, we learned to look behind us to see where we came from, to fully experience the beauty which surrounds us all and appreciate our accomplishments. Lessons we still carry with us today.

Chapter 6.

Happy Trails

Throughout the east coast of Canada, Tourism Associations are naming routes after historical occurrences, or physical features, and providing maps and literature with which to self-discover an area. We enjoyed the dual perspective of viewing scenery with our own eyes and then again through our minds eye of inhabitants of years ago.

About 1000 years ago the Vikings stopped in Newfoundland, for a while, and left enough artefacts to stimulate the local tourism office to name the highway between Gros Morne and St. Anthony “The Viking Trail.”

We followed the Lighthouse Trail from Halifax to Yarmouth and the Evangeline Trail from Yarmouth to Digby. The Evangeline trail owes its name to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow who, in 1847, published his epic poem Evangeline. Set around the time of the expulsion of 6,000 Acadians to other British Colonies in 1755, Evangeline is essentially the romantic story of a devoted wife. Evangeline, the belle of Grand Pré, marries her childhood sweetheart, Gabriel, and then is forcibly separated from him by political circumstances. She devotes 40 years to finding him and, when she does, he is on his deathbed. The shock for both their systems is too much, and they die in each other’s arms. (sniff)

The Covered Bridge Trail in New Brunswick took us on a route of covered bridges unlike anything we have on the west coast. Le Petit Témis, stretching between New Brunswick and Québec, is a well signed and serviced converted rail bed. In Québec and Ontario we followed the historic water ways.

The last tourism route we followed was the Red Coat Trail on the prairies. In 1874 the Mounties made their way west to bring law and order to the prairies. We followed their route from Winnipeg, Manitoba, to Fort McLeod, Alberta.

In some ways the routes advocated by tourist associations have all the trappings of our cultural tracks. The Career Track or the Kiddie Track, if it were advertised by tourist associations, would have you spend all your time and energy developing a public profile for yourself or your children. I visualise life tracks as wheels in a hamster cage, without beginning or end, and wonder at the single mindlessness of what I used to do all day for employers.

Maureen and I were on the Housing Track, devoting our time, energy and money to maintaining and paying off the house. Like the Tourist Associations routes, there were cultural historical reasons for our being *on track*. It is an easy and acceptable trap — I mean track — to fall into. I am not suggesting having a house, a career or children is a bad thing. Neither am I suggesting that a planned retirement, a paid house and lots of available time after retirement, is without value. I am suggesting that all of us should examine our lifestyle more often to see if we are getting value and meaning from what we’re doing. Perhaps, like Tourism material, the route we are on is over-hyped.

One day Maureen and I realised that the largest possible bi-weekly mortgage payments were buying us a house at the expense of a life. We were trying to keep up with the culturally accepted ideals of housing and recreation. When I lost my job and Maureen was on less than half pay, the pressure to accept any job to continue the mortgage payments was enormous. Luckily, like so many others before us, and hopefully others after us, we were able to recognise the crossroads we were at. We realised it was possible to go a different direction, to change our lives and to live with less money and material goods.

Too many people live with career decisions they made when they were fresh out of high school or college, in different economic or temporal times. Why live with a decision that turns out to be inappropriate?

We met many people who said they could never do what we did because of the kids. That may be true, but every year at least one set of parents embarks on an epic ride with their kids. A few years ago I conducted a private cycling skills course for a couple who were taking their twelve year old out of school, for a year, to ride around the world. In 1999, while Maureen and I rode across Canada, the Romp family party of five, children aged twelve, eight and three, travelled from Vermont to Alaska on bicycle.

Decisions we had made five years ago about housing, jobs and saving were no longer valid. We were living the life of our parents for the sake of appearance and because we didn't know what else to do. Certainly because it was easier to adopt a life rather than make one. We accepted life as a rat race and that going to work everyday was the *real world*. After our trip, I lost count of how many times we were welcomed back to *reality*.

People don't have to sell their house to get the most out of life. If we learned anything from this adventure, it's that our life was more flexible than we thought. I realise not everyone can get away from work like we did. I know there are many ways to reduce and cope with job stress. Some people avoid burn out by job sharing; others work long hours for months and then take off on extended ski or scuba vacations.

We all seem to think high-paying part-time jobs would make us happy, but high wages don't guarantee success or happiness; they only pay bills. If your bills are stressful, you need fewer and smaller bills. You won't find a perfect job, perfect house or an end to how much money you can want or spend. Maureen and I needed to determine what we could live with in the way of housing and work, and how much money was enough money, to live a more relaxed life.

In the book Your Money or Your Life, the authors explain how you can determine what *enough* is. Enough money, material goods and security. Then the authors explain how to reach that goal. It requires some work, but the work is meaningful, eye opening and can lead to greater happiness.

Happiness is an attitude, not a bank account. You cannot save up happiness for retirement. Happy old people were happy young people. Check it out yourself. Ask your parents or friends if they know someone whose personality changed upon retirement. I believe spending sixty years unhappily does not prepare you for forty happy years afterwards.

Many people are finding happiness in seizing control of their lives. More and more people are returning to school for academic upgrades and personally satisfying recreation programs. More people are home schooling, more people are self employed, more people are volunteering. Why is all this occurring? Because it adds meaning to life. If you are not happy, it is because you are not doing enough for yourself and others.

Figuring out what prevented Maureen and me from being happy brought us closer together and showed us how to be more accepting of each others' imperfections.

There were some moments on our bike trip when we really had to work to get along. We had to redefine our happiness and ourselves as we crossed Canada. It required openness, honesty and the willingness to take time to reflect on each other's abilities, goals, aspirations and egos. We did pretty well.

We were on the Rejuvenation Trail. Our marriage, our attitude toward life and work, our attitude toward family and, surprisingly, towards strangers, were all undergoing temporal changes.

Based on what we went through, my advice is to create the tourist brochure for your life. Name your path and make it meaningful. Have it reflect your own personal geography and/or history and make it become a part of your life story, not apart from it. Be open to plot twists and, especially, be willing to accept that you may not be the author of your own life story.

Think optimistically if you can, look for the bright side. If you are in a rut, think about Wagon Trails. Ruts make wagon navigation easier, except at speed. Are you going too fast? You cannot control everything in your life, but you do have control in how meaningful your life is.

The search for meaning is in all of us. Life's meanings are as clear, varied and beautiful as the multitude of stars at night. I think life has many meanings, not just one. Look up, wait until the clouds clear, if you have to, and examine the stars you can see. There are many more stars you cannot see without help. Perhaps a little helpful soul searching is required to find meaning in your life. Are you the best friend, parent, or teacher you can be? Are you generous with your time, energy and knowledge?

Like all good searches, whether it's the meanings of life or the keys you had in your hands a moment ago, there are expenses to consider. Expenses of mental and physical energy. Time may be involved, too, if you believe time is spent rather than experienced. While Maureen and I searched for our lives, we found a little money was involved, too.

One of the toughest thoughts we contemplate in our life is that we may be our own worst enemy. It isn't our parents, job or spouse that is the problem. It isn't lack of time, money or friends that prevents us from having meaningful a life. The problem is internal, not external.

Chapter 7.

New Brunswick, early July 1999.

The ferry from Digby, Nova Scotia, to St. John, New Brunswick costs \$25 per person and \$12 to lean a bike against a bulkhead. While travelling the East Coast ferries we discovered the West Coast ferries cost much less. I no longer complain BC Ferries charges \$8 per person and \$2.50 per bike.

It was raining when we arrived in St. John. Thankfully the main tourist office, also the location of the Amazing Reversing Falls, is only about a kilometre away from the ferry terminal. Unfortunately, due to the time of tides, we couldn't

witness the reversing falls. Maureen had a long chat with one of the friendly staff at the info booth and, we discovered, contrary to information we had tried to gather over the phone and on our map, there was a nearby municipal park we could camp in. Not only that, the info clerk also suggested a scenic route for us to travel the next day. Our plan for New Brunswick was to get on the Covered Bridge Route and make our way to Hartland, where the longest covered bridge in North America resides.

When we began riding inland the next day, we took the advice of the tourist info clerk and boarded the Romeo and Juliet ferry to cross the Kensington inlet. That clerk was not a cyclist! The hills were so steep that Maureen had to walk. As promised, there were hardly any cars, and it was scenic, but it wasn't a road for loaded touring.

For the first few days in New Brunswick we were as miserable as the weather. Maureen was exhausted at the end of every day and beginning to doubt her ability to ride thousands of kilometres more to reach Victoria. At the rate we were travelling, we wouldn't make it past Manitoba by fall.

As we made our way north to Hartland we began to revisit our plan to cross the country by the end of September. We needed to put our trip in perspective and reflect upon our situation, abilities and our goals.

My desire to ride across Canada was beginning to be a problem. I was both warden and inmate of the captivating idea to cross Canada on bicycle. I recall thinking that we absolutely had to ride across Canada to justify selling the house. Besides, I would be too embarrassed to return home by aeroplane or bus.

After days of thought and consideration, I released my stupid pride and told Maureen I would rather have a good time riding as far as we could than a bad time making it across Canada. I needed to be sure Maureen was riding for fun and herself, not because of guilt or pressure to meet one of my goals. I continued to hope we could cross Canada but accepted that we might not.

Personal growth comes from knowing when to start and stop asking yourself questions. I start asking myself questions when something doesn't feel right and I stop when I think I know what is really going on. I asked myself if I was

willing to risk our relationship simply to brag I had crossed Canada by bike. What is more important? Some would choose cycling: I chose Maureen, and I also chose to try to help her find the motivation we started out with.

I believe you cannot motivate another person, but you can remove the obstacles that prevent people from motivating themselves. Everyone needs to feel competent, and I hadn't let Maureen feel proud of the amazing accomplishments she was making every day. Instead of feeling accomplished, she was feeling guilty because she wasn't sharing in making supper and cleaning up. Instead of passive acceptance of her efforts, she needed to hear how amazing she was. She needed to know I was making supper to celebrate her accomplishments.

Compared to what we had been able to do the year before, we were doing great. Putting our trip in proper perspective helped us when we met other cyclists who had travelled thousands more kilometres in six weeks than we had.

After a long chat about goals and outcomes, Maureen was still tired at the end of each day, but we were able to ride many 100+ kilometre days in a row through to Ontario. The weather improved a bit, but I don't think that accounts for Maureen's ability. Every day we celebrated victories, instead of defeats, and very soon we were both feeling better about the whole trip, and more relaxed when problems arose.

We had a few planning mishaps in New Brunswick. Outside of Mactaquac we mistook advice about where to buy groceries and arrived at Heritage Farm Campground without food and seriously hungry. To remedy the situation, the campground operator took us through her house, stopping at the freezer to give us breaded chicken strips then into the kitchen for bread, vegetables and fruit. Later that evening she came around with another plate of food from her dinner table.

Hartland has a municipal campground, or so it said on our map. It is now a shopping centre. "No problem," said a tourist info clerk, "the golf course just out of town takes campers." Well, perhaps they do by now. When we arrived, the road to their campsite was steep and gravel, and the washroom building was not finished. For a while, it looked like we were out of luck. We sought out the golf course

manager and explained our situation. With his permission, we took a shower in the clubhouse and pitched our tent beside the tenth green when the golf course closed for the evening. Very nice grass; I highly recommend it.

The next morning we packed up before the first enthusiasts were on the greens and went to the clubhouse to freshen up. The manager invited us to help ourselves to coffee in the restaurant and waived the camping fee we had agreed upon the previous night.

As for the Hartland longest covered bridge in North America, it was more interesting to look at than ride on. Maureen was absolutely spooked, and I wasn't having too much fun either. What we didn't realise, until we got there, was that the bridge was one lane and motorists take turns, from either end, going through. Long covered bridges are just like tunnels. It was very dark, and motorists had trouble seeing us because of the contrasting daylight at the ends. The brightness at the end of the bridge also prevented us from seeing debris and road irregularities in front of the tires. It was a bumpy and nervous ride.

On the covered bridge route we concluded that Tourism isn't as highly regarded in New Brunswick as it is in the other Maritime Provinces. Here are three examples:

The absolute worst roadside washroom we visited crossing Canada was just outside of Queenstown, NB. The word *disgusting* hardly conveys the sphincter stopping odours emanating from this facility.

Due to no signage, we rode around Oromocto twice looking for the tourist info booth. Lastly, Maureen called the toll free tourist info number three times and got three different answers to "Where is the closest campground to St. John?"

That being said, if you are ever in Fredericton looking for a B&B, go to The Very Best - A Victorian B&B. Both the owners and the house are fabulous. Comfy rooms with private washrooms, excellent food and an excellent attitude by the owners. A restored heritage home, whose history is posted in the main hallway, it also provides the delight for cyclists of being able to eat until full. The owners happily kept bringing out breakfast items and we, happily, kept eating them!

Another favourite part of New Brunswick was just outside of Edmunston at La Jardin de la Republic Provincial Park. The camping is good in the regular motorist-type sites, but the cycling section doesn't have a cook shelter and the washrooms are quite a ways away. The park is attached, on one side, to a wonderful botanical garden. The other side of the park is the terminus of a 130 kilometre multi-use trail.

The gardens are a delight for rose bush enthusiasts. We went back to the rose garden three times so Maureen could sniff the flowers again. All the colours of irises fascinated me. There was a man-made waterfall and soft music playing through speakers hidden in the under growth. It was delightful.

The multi-use trail, Linéaire Parc Le Petit Témis, crosses into Quèbec about ten kilometres from the campground. We spent a whole day riding 120 kilometres to Saint Modeste, stopping in the velo city of Dègelis for breakfast and in Cabano for lunch.

In Dègelis, most of the merchants and restaurants decorated their property with festive bicycles. That certainly made us feel like we were in the right place. Le Petit Témis was a model facility that cut through many towns and resort areas. In 1990 an enthusiastic group began converting an abandoned rail bed into Le Petit Témis. The route is well marked; free maps are easy to find, and the trail-side facilities are great, and cyclists are never too far from food and lodging. Best of all, toilets and picnic tables appear regularly along the route.

How is this facility possible? About half way to Saint Modeste, in Sainte Louis de Ha!-Ha!, we were stopped by the velo-police and required to buy a licence for \$10 each. We happily paid it; the trail was that good.

In Quèbec we found the cleanest highway rest stops, the best bakeries and the worst private campgrounds. Riding Highway 132, south of the St. Lawrence, we passed through many small towns with big churches and saw many old farmhouses built of stone. We met some terrific people who proved to us that language does not have to be a barrier.

Farmers' fields were either filled with bales of hay or overgrown with ripe corn ready for picking. At home, in BC, the corn would not be ready for another month, but Quebec's hot and humid late July weather allowed the many roadside mais vendors to indulge in a corny mid-summer.

It was a dark and stormy night: rain beat heavily on the tent as thunder followed lightening in quick succession. I woke with a start, our dome tent being violently curved inwards by the fierce force of the wind. Sweat ran down my face, and rain ran rivers through the campground and under our tent. Though we had pitched our tent on high ground, it wasn't high enough to counter the fury and pounding of this summer rainstorm.

The floor of the tent bulged like a waterbed mattress between our two sleeping pads. We gathered clothing and books from the tent floor and piled it on our legs. Out in the vestibule my floating thongs lazily bobbed up and down against the side of the tent. Our roll of toilet paper was out there too and, by morning, it resembled a pile of lumpy vanilla pudding.

The storm was at its worse around midnight. At 4 a.m. there wasn't a cloud in the pre-dawn sky. Wind rustled through the tops of trees as we made our way over the squishy ground to the outhouses. Four hours later, when we were getting ready to leave, there were few puddles and little evidence of the midnight storm.

On a typical day in the latter half of New Brunswick, all the way to Espanola, Ontario, the day had a bright, sunny start; clouds and headwinds arrived by early afternoon, and warm rain fell in the evening.

There were only private campgrounds on our route through Quèbec. At the height of the summer the crowds in these campgrounds varied from crowded to very crowded. The largest campground we stayed in had a pool, laundry, a store, a chapel, a huge barn social centre and, we estimated, about 800 people of whom half seemed to be permanent summer guests.

We were surprised, but prepared, to discover that toilet paper is an important commode-ity in the private campgrounds of Quèbec. Lac Morin was not the first, nor the last, campground we stayed at where toilet paper was optional. The

campground operators at Lac Morin, north of Laurentides, were the only people we met who showed no patience for our high school French. Further, they ignored us at their private canteen and were slow to react to our complaints of a loud neighbour with a stereo. When they finally did react, instead of asking the audio enthusiast to keep the noise down, they sent a pickup truck to move us to the far end of the campground away from all the facilities we paid \$24 to be close to. By then it was raining and we had to hastily decide where to put up the tent on that dark and stormy night.

Nightly camping fees were often around \$12 across Canada, peaking at \$24 in Lac Morin, the only place, other than Digby, I would recommend avoiding.

We approached Québec City from the south, taking the ferry at Lévis. The view from the ferry terminal was postcard perfect. Tall green roofed chateaus, the steep cliffs of the Cap Diamant promontory, the fortified walls of the Citadel, and all the churches and apartment towers set in enough green foliage to make the city intriguing and inviting. The whole look of the city was much more European than Canadian.

We booked a room for two nights at the Clarendon. We had no trouble finding it because, while aboard the ferry, we struck up a conversation with a local cyclist who guided us up Notre Dame, the steep access road to the old town, and showed us the front door.

With our bikes safely in the room, we walked around the old part of town for two days, touring the Citadel, still home of the 22nd Regiment and location of one of the homes of the Governor General. We walked across the Plains of Abraham, where the French lost the city to the British in 1759. We dined at sidewalk cafés and walked through the shops of Le Petit Champlain, the oldest shopping area in North America.

We had been warned, by both cyclist and motorist, in the Maritimes and at home, that we wouldn't find Québec friendly or hospitable. 'The drivers were crazy,' we heard over and over again.

We had one day of route anxiety riding 116 kilometres from Lac Morin to Montebello following the narrow winding highway 148 north of Montreal. It was Friday afternoon rush hour on a nice summer day, and it was obvious many people were leaving town for the weekend. Maureen was forced off the road three times close to Mirabel airport and we were both suffering from bladder anxiety since stopping at a gas station to rest and have a large drink, and then discovering they wouldn't allow us to use the washroom. Under those kinds of stresses, it doesn't matter what province you are in, the riding is unpleasant. Other than that day, motorists were pretty co-operative.

"Excuse me sir, would you come with me?"

"Sure," I said, "where to?"

"To Security," said Ian, our parliamentary tour guide,

"I believe you are carrying a concealed..."

Chapter 8.

Ontario - In sickness and in health

My heart jumped as we approached the security desk. For the first time I became aware of the guns lashed around the waists of security guards. The only exit was far down the hallway. I'd never make it.

Had I ridden my bike half way across the country only to be arrested in Ottawa? So far we had been enjoying the National Capital District. Two days earlier my heart skipped a beat as we viewed Ottawa from across the river in Hull. We rode to the National Capital District tourist office, and while I waited for Maureen to pick up tourist info, I felt a lump in my throat viewing the Terry Fox Memorial and behind that, the Centre Block of Parliament.

In school we were constantly reminded how important Ottawa is to Canada. Suddenly I felt like I was in the fabled land. For some reason I thought I'd never get

to Ottawa and, if and when I did, I didn't think it would affect me, but it did. I was teary eyed just being there.

The crowds of tourist families slightly outnumbered well-dressed government employees. Cars moved slowly on the streets, Mounties on horseback with a pack of camera clicking followers. Statues, tour buses, manicured lawns and shrubs. Ottawa really is something special.

Our parliamentary tour guide also thought I was something special. At first I denied I was carrying a concealed tape recorder. I immediately retracted that statement because, well, the tape recorder was concealed in my shoulder bag. However, the microphone was in plain view, but it was small, black and clipped to the black shoulder strap of the bag I was carrying.

At the security desk I was asked to turn off my recorder and put the microphone away. Perplexed, I asked if all the people with video recorders would be doing the same thing. No answer, just staring. Long seconds passed.

'Why are you recording the Parliamentary tour?'

'I am recording it for my father back home in BC.' I said. I didn't say, "Who cares why, what difference does it make?"

After a few more questions, and confessing I was not a reporter and that I would not be broadcasting the recordings, I was allowed to join the tour group and allowed to tape record the tour for personal use only. Sorry world.

The tour began without further fuss. Maybe I obnoxiously leaned toward our tour guide more than I had to, but I did get a good recording of the tour. The Parliament tour was the best tour we had across Canada. Our guide declared some of the participants honorary Senators, then told them where they'd sit and what they'd be doing. We were encouraged to speculate about everything and I discovered there were some bright and knowledgeable kids in the crowd. Ian was a model tour guide.

Throughout Ontario we stayed with family and friends more often than in campgrounds and motels. The night before we arrived in Ottawa we phoned family friends in Nepean to let them know we were on the way.

We spent two days in Ottawa travelling back and forth to Nepean by bus. Besides the Parliament Buildings, we toured the National Gallery of Canada and the Royal Mint. The weather was hot and humid, and we looked forward to jumping in the backyard pool each evening when we returned to Nepean. Suddenly we had that vacation feeling again.

The tour at the Royal Mint was interesting, but we tried to see too much of the National Gallery and, in the end, saw far too many exhibits too quickly and over stimulated ourselves trying to understand it all.

It was great to catch up with family friends and, though we could have stayed a week and done something different each day, we had to move along.

We were discussing how we would cross Northern Ontario just about every day. I had, weeks before in New Brunswick, agreed to contemplate alternatives to riding the notoriously poor highway between Sudbury and Thunder Bay.

East travelling cyclists we had spoken with said they wouldn't ride through Northern Ontario again or they had gone through the US to avoid that section. Elliott Katz, in *The Complete Guide to Cycling in Canada*, recommends going through the states. Maureen was really nervous because, if I had my way, we'd be riding for seven days in heavy traffic on a highway with no shoulders.

Traffic doesn't bother me like it bothers some, but being dead or divorced does. I encouraged Maureen to fully explore the alternatives. The best alternative, for us, was to take the train from Sudbury to Sault Ste.Marie, or Thunder Bay.

Most west travelling cyclists go directly west from Ottawa. Our route took us on a U-shaped route south to Kingston, west along Lake Ontario to Oshawa, North to Markham, Barrie, over to Southampton then finally north, up the Bruce Peninsula, to Espanola where we joined the Trans Canada Highway.

In Kingston we stayed with my aunt. Tante Gré, my father's oldest sister, lives in the small house where she and her husband raised 12 children. They immigrated to Canada from the Netherlands in the late 40's, a few years before my father and mother. They built the house in 1951 when they had only eight children. Then they built furniture, hooked two huge rugs and grew as much food as they

could in their large back yard. What a struggle it must have been, especially in a house most people would consider small for four people, let alone fourteen!

Occasionally, as we crossed the country, I had to pause and think how fortunate we were. When my parents, aunts and uncles were my age, they were still struggling to make ends meet. That was 30 years ago. As we went through Newfoundland, a place where bicycles are a rarity, I felt conspicuously rich and spoiled. Some families could eat for months for the price of my bike. They could live a year on what we budgeted for four months. We are truly part of a fortunate generation.

Kingston to Carrying Place is one of the most beautiful roads around. Set on the north shore of Lake Ontario, there was hardly any traffic and almost always a view of sailboats and maple tree shorelines.

Thunderstorms and rain showers followed us out of Kingston. We rode faster than the approaching storms the first day but, on our second day, we had the novel and frightening experience of riding in a lightning storm. Drenched, we began looking for a motel or B&B for the night. We missed the tourist info booth signs in Bowmanville and ended up on the far side of town before we realised we had gone astray. It was the beginning of the August long weekend, and neither of us felt like riding back through town, and through traffic, to look for a tourist booth we weren't confident existed. Instead we rode into the open bay of the Clarington fire department and got accommodation advice and out of the rain.

What a great bunch of guys. We chatted for quite a while with about eight of them. We phoned hotels and motels in a 15-kilometre radius. Everything was sold out. Maureen had begun the day tired, and now she was exhausted, but I could tell she was on the edge. The last thing she needed was a night spent setting up a tent, eating and sleeping in thunderstorms. I suggested we phone Viv and Seb.

We met Viv and Seb in northern Newfoundland. Maureen and Viv were instant buddies, and she invited us to stay with them when we got to Ontario. Viv had sent us an email to reaffirm the invitation and say she was enjoying our ongoing website.

We phoned Viv from the Fire Hall office, and she jumped in her car and drove to meet us in Oshawa. Before we left Bowmanville we took photos of the fire fighters and thanked them for all their help. I highly recommend fire fighters for their hospitality and local knowledge of hotels and motels.

On the way to Oshawa a motorist pulled us over to ask where we were going. I gave him a quick synopsis and he most adamantly offered to buy us dinner anywhere close so he could hear the unabridged story. We had to refuse because of meeting Viv. While waiting for Viv in Oshawa, a cyclist pulled up in a car and asked where we'd been and what we'd seen. He went home, checked out our website and sent us emails for the remainder of our trip.

There were many times a little introduction card would have been nice. A good idea would have been to make little cards to give to people along the way. A business card sort of thing to ease introductions and maintain contacts.

We spent the long weekend with Viv and Seb. Maureen's birthday passed quietly because she made me promise not to tell them it was her birthday. I gave her a card, a little gift and a big kiss. All three were easy to pack.

On the Tuesday evening after the long weekend Viv drove us to Barrie. Though the weekend had begun with Maureen tired and sore, our fortunes reversed when I developed the flu. I ached all over, all my joints and my head, and spent my time in slow motion. I don't recall very much of what went on for days.

So began the determining factor regarding crossing Ontario. I was sick for seven days in Barrie. Time passed slowly; Maureen got sick, too, and soon there was no way we could make it to Banff by mid-September unless some other transport was found.

We were well cared for, though. Staying with the parents of friends of ours in Vancouver, Doug's parents Fred and Mary did everything to make us feel welcome and help us recover from our illness. Hot meals and drinks, warm baths and beds, cool windy weather kept away by solid brick walls. Sometimes Maureen and I wonder what we would have done without them. Stayed in a campground for a week? Hardly! I probably would have got pneumonia.

Whatever lucky star was travelling with us across Canada, it had once again shone a path in a most favourable direction. By now there was no denying our luck and the twisted outcomes. The broken wheel of fortune in PEI had set in motion an unforeseeable sequence of events that allowed Maureen to be off the bike for a week and still make it to Halifax. Now I had been off the bike a week, and the outcome would be that Maureen would get her wish of bypassing Northern Ontario.

Besides our good fortune of ending up well cared for in Barrie, one of the best parts of our cross-Canada trip was getting to know Fred and Mary and getting a better understanding of our friend Doug through his parents. We saw the books he read as a child and the models he built, and we heard about his childish misadventures told only the way parents can tell those stories.

Some people would hate having friends invade their lives in this manner, but Fred and Mary told respectful, well-balanced, mostly humorous stories. If you ever get the chance to sit with the parents of your friends, consider it a sort of art history lesson. After all, you already know what the finished product looks like, take some time to see how it got that way.

On the morning of our seventh day in Barrie, amidst light rain and coughs, we bid our hosts good-bye and began a three-day trip to Southampton to stay the night with parents of another friend.

Along the way we stayed in the Best Western in Collingwood and followed the Georgian Bay Trail to Meaford, then Owen Sound, where we stayed in the most unpleasant motel anywhere in Canada: The Crystal Motel. The owner's attitude was as bad as the room. We were charged more than the posting on the door and his comment was 'So?' So we had nowhere else to go. Then he slammed the door on Maureen's foot. Motel not recommended!

The Georgian Bay Trail, another converted rail bed, was in pretty good condition. Not super hard pack but easily done on our thin tires. The best part was that it was much less windy than open highway and, though our speed was slower on the trail than the road, we really needed a day of riding side by side at a slower pace.

Southampton is a charming little vacation spot that I would certainly return to if I ever go out that way again. Long beaches, warm water and generations of families stretched out on the warm sand. I bet many a fond summer memory is formed at the lake or in one of the many streets and avenues of tiny cottages. We found a bakery and a bookshop with ample high-quality items. What more could you want from a summer destination?

Barb and Graham, parents of our loud laughing friend Joan, are just as loud laughing and loveable as she is. Though we arrived late in the afternoon, stayed only the one night, and left with them the next morning for a driving tour of the area, we got to know them pretty well.

Barb and Graham showed us the countryside between Port Elgin to Tobermorey on the Bruce Peninsula. We had lunch together right in Tobermorey, beside the water and wharves, and then they dropped us at a campground at the edge of town. The next morning it was an easy ride to catch the ferry to Manitoulin Island.

On Manitoulin Island we stayed at the Batman Tent and Trailer Park where the summer permanents were holding their annual End of the Summer Potluck. The grey and blue hair crowd was having a good time as a guitar-playing entertainer led the singing and spoon playing. With approximately six weeks of riding to go, we thought it was hasty and inappropriate to be celebrating the end of the summer so prematurely.

Our last evening in Ontario was spent in Espanola. From there we caught a Grey Hound Bus for a twenty-five hour trip to Winnipeg. The bus ride allowed us to get back on schedule to meet up with Terry and Linda in Banff and miss the treacherous part of Highway 1.

Just outside of Winnipeg is my home town of Transcona. I was a long-haired teenager when our family left Transcona in the early 1970's. I had my hair cut in Grade 11 and always kept it short after that until October 1998. When I got laid off, I decided to let my hair grow.

A few days before arriving in Transcona, I had my long hair cut in Barrie, Ontario. I was wondering why I had been growing my hair for a year and a half. Was I trying to relive my teen years? Was I doing it to feel or look younger?

In the heat of Quèbec I began to reconsider its worth, by Ontario the amount of grooming exceeded any return to youthful feelings and, during my bout with the flu, it was in the way and it had to go.

Long hair did not help me to relive my youth, and neither did riding through Transcona. I wondered what I had hoped to find after a 29-year absence. I pointed out the changes to Maureen. The house was a different colour, the ditches were filled, the lane was paved and favourite fences were gone. Everything was older; the houses and the street had shrunk. The trees were larger but, having hid behind every one of them in my youth, I noticed there were fewer of them. No need for a camera here; I grew up 30 years from this place.

Over at the old school, which was now an administration building, I showed Maureen where I played marbles during winter recesses. Close by, we tried the church doors, but they were locked. I felt disappointment that it all didn't mean more to me. It was little more than familiar. Where was the gush of fun memories?

We rode past the local grocery store, but it was only recognisable by its location.

The familiarity made me smile, and I began to recall the names of my friends and where they lived. Long-forgotten street names rolled off my tongue as I repeated them over and over to get a feel for them again. Leola (lee-o-lah) and Wayota (way-o-tah) I sang to myself in a private version of the instrumental, Tequila!

I showed Maureen where Bernie, Edna and the kids lived before moving to Nepean. I pointed out where Terry Fox grew up and wondered what he would have thought of Transcona had he made it this far on his cross-Canada journey.

Mom had asked me to drop in on old friends who still lived on the street and still sent her a newsy letter every Christmas. We rode past their house twice, and finally I told Maureen I wanted to leave Transcona.

I had had enough. My camera was idle in my pocket. I'd rather recall the few memories I have of how our house used to be, rather than this open casket viewing of how it turned out. Well preserved but no life.

As if to coincide with my mood, the wind picked up and we barely made it back to our motel before a hail storm struck with such force an ice mist formed a foot above the ground. The mist reminded me of backyard skating rinks my father used to make and how, every spring, the rink melted away in the sun. In my mind's eye, I can see the mist rising over the backyard rink while I look through the white wood trimmed double windows of the kitchen. It was yesterday, but a long time ago.

Behind us lay the works of man, with their noises; before us stretched out the handiwork of God with its eternal solitudes. The first sight of the prairie is as impressive as the first sight of the sea. There at our feet it spread out, silent, immeasurable, sublime. In a few moments we were to go forth upon it, and for months and months it was to be our home.

Henri Julien (1852 - 1908)

Chapter 9.

The Red Coat Trail

Between early July to early October in 1874, a contingent of North West Mounted Police (NWMP) comprised of 22 officers, 287 Constables and Sub-Constables, 310 horses, 67 wagons, 114 ox-carts, 18 yoke of oxen, 50 cows and 40 calves, travelled across the hot Canadian prairies to bring law and order to the west. Among them was artist Henri Julien who recorded the trip in sketches and diary entries for the Canadian Illustrated News.

One hundred and twenty-five years later, between mid-August and early September 1999, Maureen and I followed the Red Coat Trail for much of the same distance, saw many of the same things as recorded by Mr. Julien but, overall, we rode in entirely different lands.

We met with some of the same delightful surprises the roving party of NWMP took advantage of. We enjoyed viewing the peaceful setting of the many marshes and swamps filled with busy ducks of all sorts. The NWMP often feasted on duck dinner as they made their way across the prairies. They also found three occasions to stock up on wild buffalo meat; we saw one buffalo farm with a tiny shaggy herd.

We carried bagels and meal replacement bars, energy drinks and food for only a couple of days. They carried little more than pemmican, a dried beaten meat mixed with flour, fat and molasses. The molasses and flour are optional.

We often found stores and gas stations two times a day; the NWMP went days without water, and their horses went even longer without food. They lost about twenty horses due to starvation when their supply of oats ran out.

We didn't find the wasteland Mr. Julien described; instead we rode past thriving, seemingly endless, fields of wheat ready for harvest. We also saw the light blue flowers of flax and huge bales of hay. Perhaps this was the garden vision Mr. Julien was thinking of.

You throw the reins on your horse's neck and let him jog on at will, while your eyes roam over the waste and your thoughts wander as the winds. This has truly been called "The Great Lone Land.." Its silence and its solitude weigh on you like a mechanical power. The breeze circles around your brow and bears no odour of flowers on its wings. There are no green trees even on the water's brink, and hence no wild birds carolling among the boughs. It is a real desert; a land of desolation; and it will remain such until the white man settles upon it and turns the waste into a garden.

The Diary of Henri Julien, August 4, 1874

On the Prairies we were riding there was no such desert. The crosswinds brought smells of fields and marshes to our noses and the closest we felt to desolation was the day we travelled between Ogema and Assiniboia in Saskatchewan. Even then we had the company of birds picking at the endless supply of grasshoppers and crickets on the road.

While others dance with wolves, we rode with a variety of dragon flies, little white butterflies and Road Kill. We also road past many dead rodents and birds, some wonderful birds of prey, frogs, snakes, salamanders by the dozens and one very beautiful red fox that made me weep. The term Road Kill, it seems to me, exonerates the guilty and hardly describes the slaughter we saw and smelled.

The Red Coat Trail is south of the Trans Canada Highway and follows Highway 2 in Manitoba, Highway 13 in Saskatchewan and Highway 3 in Alberta. Many of the motoring tourists we met on the Prairies were pleasant enough but held the general opinion that, driving east or west, the Prairies were better off behind you.

The Prairies were great. The terrain is mildly undulating, and unlike BC, where a road would begin low, at sea level or some river bed, then go up and down, the prairies are the opposite. Riding at prairie level the roads descend into a gulch and rise back up. In this manner, looking across the prairie, a traveller can easily be fooled to think the road is straight and there is nothing around. Nothing, that is, but wind and wheat.

We were fooled at first. One day in Manitoba we kept seeing highway signs indicating we were nearing Wawanesa. Two kilometres away and there was no sight of the town we hoped to lunch in. One kilometre away and a highway sign pointed off the highway. We stopped and checked the map; we still couldn't see the town. Moments later, after a steep descent, we were riding the main street where we stopped in at Ropers Restaurant for the best omelette of our entire trip.

From Winnipeg, riding along Highway #2, we stayed in St. Claude, Sprucewood Provincial Park, and Souris in Manitoba. Continuing into Saskatchewan we stayed in Redvers; Arcola; Weyburn; Ogema and finally Assiniboia before taking a mental and physical break.

Sprucewood Provincial Park is about twelve kilometres north of Highway #2 and the furthest we ever went off the main road for a campsite. It is a large park built to cater to motor campers and children. The showers and laundry, obviously an after thought, were built quite a ways from the tent sites. We found our site, set up our tent, forgot to hide our food, then rode back up the road to wash ourselves and our clothing. While we were gone the squirrels were feasting.

In Souris we camped in the noisy and too-well-lit municipal park. There, on a narrow piece of grass, between two summer-resident mobile homes, I laid the ground sheet down. I was in the process of de-bagging the tent when my neighbour told me I was about to set up on a stream path. He explained that if it rains, the water would go right underneath our tent. Even though the forecast was for continued hot and dry weather, I moved the ground sheet to another area to politely and respectfully heed the advice of a fellow camper. An hour later, due to the collected overflow of tap water throughout the campsite, there was a puddle where I was going to put the tent.

On our way to the campground in Souris we spotted what we thought would be the perfect place to get some food. The Chocolate Shop Restaurant sounded like a little piece of heaven. We set up camp, cleaned up and walked into town, down the street, through the doors and found a Greek Restaurant. That was fine; we like Greek food. We were shown a table and given menus: souvlaki, pizza and pastas, the usual fare, but where was the chocolate stuff?

We asked our waitress if there was a dessert menu. That was probably a pretty standard question, because we received a very bored response. The owner bought the restaurant, but it was too costly to change the name on the outside of the building. The result is, no chocolate.

That night we met our first, and only, west-bound cyclist. Solo and strong, he was heading for Calgary on a time schedule reserved for workaholics. I bet he made it too.

The next morning, Maureen and I got up early hoping to ride while it was cool and the wind was calm. On August 20 it was dark when I got out of bed to put

coffee on and it was cold too. The seasons were changing. We were riding by 8 a.m. and around 9:30, about the time we usually got going, the wind was coming up.

We crossed into Saskatchewan and made it to Redvers, stopping at the log cabin info booth where they serve coffee and Saskatoon berry pie. Having ridden 115 kilometres, Maureen and I practically dropped into their chairs and didn't get up for an hour.

The people in Redvers were the friendliest we had met so far. The two young women in the info booth were fascinated about our trip and urged us to tell them about everywhere we had been. Maureen perked right up and chatted easily. We paid for a camp spot on the large lawn behind the log cabin and went into town to buy groceries.

Talk about a friendly town. Just about everyone in the IGA came to say hello. At least a dozen people were interested in where we had come from and where we were going. The manager of the store introduced himself and wanted us to know that he and all his staff would help if there was anything we needed. We felt honoured and welcomed by all the attention.

That evening we witnessed violent Prairie weather first hand. We originally set up the tent by a picnic table on the big lawn, but when we saw some large dark storm clouds being blown in, we decided to move everything under cover of the cook shelter. Almost as soon as the move was done, the rain started, then hail, then larger hail until we experienced the proverbial hail the size of golf balls. The noise hail makes banging on a cook shelter roof is beyond compare. It starts as the sound of random hammer knocks on a piece of wood; the frequency of the knocks increases rapidly to the point where it is a loud continuous sound, and then it tapers off as it began.

Wind is also a factor. We heard a farm, sixty kilometres away, had been ripped up overnight by the storm. We saw the damage on the evening TV news the next night in Arcola. Neighbours with tractors were helping clear the storm debris. The near miss frightened us.

Upon arriving in Arcola, we went to the municipal campground, but it was a small, flat dead lawn without a cook shelter or trees for cover. There were large clouds coming our way, and we thought we should hide. It was a good excuse to do laundry.

We passed through the town of Manor and had a good laugh with the owner of the General Store. I was asking him about a few things we had seen along the way. What crop has blue flowers? Flax. Why are there huge tankers of ammonia on all the farms? Ammonia is a spray-on fertiliser.

My last question was about the bales of hay we had seen on the road side. Why, I asked him, are farmers dropping off hay on the roadside? The fellow laughed and I immediately knew I had made some sort of mistake.

Along the road we had seen the large roll bales of hay beside fenced-off fields of hay or wheat. At first I thought the bales of hay had fallen off a truck but realised they appeared too regularly. Judging by the growth underneath some of them, the bales had been there many weeks.

With a chuckle he told us that the hay had been bailed there, not put there. The Highways Department allows farmers to harvest the roadside but, if farmers don't cut it by a certain date, the department will mow it down and leave it to rot. Farmers are on a schedule to cut and bail but in no rush to pick it up.

I thanked the fellow for helping us understand the prairies.

'No problem,' he said, 'I like answering questions. Besides, if I don't know the answer, I just make something up and you'll never know.'

Next stop was Weyburn where we learned, while engaging in some idle chit chat with a campground neighbour, that there had been an earth quake in Turkey and 20,000 people were thought to be dead. 'Oh Jeez,' was my response to so many deaths. My comment seemed so inappropriate, in scale, to the disaster.

When we began our trip, I often listened to news on my portable radio but, as we crossed the country, I listened less and less often. Part of letting go, for me, was weaning myself away from news on the hour and the half hour, in the daily paper and the local weeklies. News that ranges from bad to worse or so trivial it was

annoying. I began to wonder what I wanted to hear, why I wanted to hear it and what it would mean to me.

Prince Edward and Sophie Rhys-Jones got married, students in Taber were buried, politicians step down, bombing steps up, Quèbec nurses on strike, gas prices get a hike, Clinton innocent and Kervorkian guilty, space walks and peace talks, NATO and Nisga'a; Kosovo and Kennedy, scores and stocks, and on and on. All that information was much more than I needed for contemplating stalks of wheat at the roadside. Navel gazing to be sure.

World news is everything to the millions of people on the treadmill of commerce. A treadmill so large the curve cannot be seen and most people don't even know they're on it. So wide is the treadmill that when someone drops off, hardly anyone notices.

The treadmill was months behind us and the news, though often sad, was far removed from us. The rhythm of cycling is unconnected to the hectic news world. The newspaper, radio, and TV are instruments to record the passing of life and death on the treadmill.

The real news for travellers on the prairies is the look and feel of the wind whispering over the crops, the sun crossing the sky and the abundance of wispy clouds. Each moment a fingerprint on the hand of time. Familiar roads never travelled before, new smells that bring back memories and a rhythm of riding so compelling you are drawn to no other place than where you are.

Ironically, amidst the beauty of Saskatchewan, Maureen had one of her worst days. Between Winnipeg and Assiniboia we averaged ninety-four kilometres a day for eight days. The wind, the pace and the lack of rest days was beginning to take its toll on Maureen's knees, arms and mood.

We left Ogema shortly after witnessing a spectacular sunrise. The sun rose over the silhouette of a lone grain elevator in the south and, arching its way across the sky, a band of cloud came in from the north and coloured the world with the orange gold colours of fall.

Consulting the map the night before, we knew we wouldn't pass a town all day. Maureen was prepared for a long day but, as the day wore on and the wind grew stronger, she grew weaker, mentally and physically.

The eight litres of liquids we carried lasted almost until the end. We had snacked in the sun at the road side and ate lunch in the shade of three hay bales. Later in the afternoon we rested in the shade of some low bushes until biting flies found us. The last twenty kilometres were torture for Maureen. For three hours we gazed upon Assiniboias' grain elevators getting larger. A little further, we thought, just a little further and still a little further to go.

Two kilometres from Assiniboia as we entered the city limits, Maureen stopped at the roadside and began crying. She had been struggling for the last ten kilometres. I pushed her for a while, so she could coast, but it didn't help. Unable to feel comfortable on her saddle she tried walking, but the bike was hard to control in the wind. She said she'd accept a ride from the first motorist that offered, but no cars came by. We stood there, the two of us, out in the heat of the day, holding on to each other at the roadside.

I held her while she cried; that's all I could do. Tears drew lines down her dusty face exposing the redness caused by sun, heat and exhaustion. The headwind had been stronger than usual, and we experienced the worst pavement of anywhere across Canada.

On the bright side, of all the places we rode to across Canada, no other town compared to our two day stay in the quiet little town of Assiniboia. Perhaps the condition of our arrival, I mean the genuine heartfelt relief to be somewhere that wasn't miles from nowhere, makes us recall Assiniboia so fondly. Certainly the friendliness of Assiniboia people transformed us from cyclists defeated by heat and wind into weather-conquering cycling heroes.

Our first stop was an air-conditioned grocery store. Cold drinks felt good, but it was at Kokopelli's Restaurant that we began to feel better. Neither one of us was in the mood to cook supper, so we went to the only restaurant we had seen coming into town. It turned out to be a very good choice. We were treated very well

and our bikes were taken into the restaurant without hesitation. Our server brought cold water immediately, let us relax a while, wash up a bit and settle in, before talking to us at length about their food and our travels. We stayed for a couple of hours feeling welcome to stay longer.

The municipal campground, at the south end of the main street, is part of the pool and recreation centre. We set up our tent behind strategically placed trees, took showers and paid campground fees at the pool.

In the early evening a local cyclist rode up to deliver a package of tourist information about the town. Stan, a chemistry teacher during the school year and a mobile tourist clerk during the summer, was amiable, informative and inquisitive. We told him we had decided to stay the next day to do laundry, get a couple rolls of film developed and generally relax from the gruelling day we had. He sympathised with our weather and road troubles then congratulated us on our fortitude.

Maureen slept for thirteen hours and I slept for ten. I got up and enjoyed a quiet cool morning in the campground, reading, writing and entertaining an adorable blue eyed cat who had decided my lap was the ultimate place to be.

When Maureen got up, I made her coffee and told her my plans to walk into town to have some film developed and do laundry. She decided she would take it easy, sit around the campground entertaining herself and the cat.

Before leaving for town I went to the washroom and, looking at the flags above the pool complex, noticed we would have had a tail wind that day. When I returned to the campsite for the film and laundry, Maureen was conversing with the owner of the van parked in front of our site. Maureen introduced me to Sally, a reporter with The Times Assiniboia. Apparently Stan, the chemistry teacher/cyclist/info clerk, also assessed campsites for interesting news items.

We happily told Sally our story, got photographed in front of our bikes and had a few laughs, now that we could, about the wind, heat and condition of the pavement. Home in BC weeks later we discovered we had been front-page news on September 6.

"Across Canada cyclists stop in Assiniboia" reads the head line. It was reported we had been there on the 18th, but my diary assures me it was the 25th of August. It was amusing to see ourselves in the newspaper and made me think of a few people around town who would point at our picture and say they had met us.

I dropped two rolls of film off at a photo shop and had a chat with the shop owner and his friend. Always time for a little chin wag on the prairies. Next stop was the laundromat and a chat with Sam, the owner.

Sam was a good host. We chatted across the counter for an hour and a half. I told him where we had been, and he told me where he had been. He told me about some farm machinery I was confused by. In particular I wanted to know what a haybiner was.

A few days back, I told Sam, we were in Pangman, population 52, at Dee's Café. I was talking to George, an 85-year-old farmer, who had been on the haybiner all morning. George was minding his son's farm because his son worked elsewhere all day to pay for the farm. George said the day looked right for haybining.

Sam told me that George was riding a haybiner/conditioner. It cuts a swath of hay, crimps it and funnels it into a path. The crimping permits air to circulate between the cut stalks of hay. The next day, Sam supposed, George would be baling the hay.

Dee, owner of the café in Pangman, smiled as I conversed with George. We found out later she was from Hope, BC, and missed the mountains. She had married, moved to Pangman, raised children and, though now divorced, was reluctant to return to BC. She told us her daughter was returning to Pangman to teach school. Pangman, population 53.

You can determine if the weather is right, Sam explained to me, if you stand with your back to the wind and look up at the clouds. With your back to the wind, he said, the high pressure is on the right and the low pressure is on the left. The direction of the wind, as seen in the clouds, will allow you to predict if the weather will be good the next day. You don't want to cut hay and have it rained on the next day. I took his word for it.

Sam excused himself a moment and returned with two ice cream bars from his personal supply at the back of the laundromat. Moments later Maureen came in and he fetched another. The two of them chatted while I sorted and folded laundry.

Maureen had been walking around town and came in to suggest we return to Kokopelli's for lunch. I agreed, and we thanked Sam for his conversation and headed out the door. Maureen wanted to pick up a few things in the drug store, so I said I'd meet her there after I picked up the photos.

The owner of the photo shop reached for my photos as soon as he saw me at the door.

"How did you like Ottawa?" he asked, obviously recognising the parliament buildings in my photos.

"Oh fine," I said, getting out the photos and going over them with him. Usually I don't inspect new photos until Maureen and I can sit down together, as we had planned to do at lunch, but I thought I could make an exception.

Photo developers at home have never asked about my photos; that would be an invasion of privacy. However, in Assiniboia, the question didn't seem to be out of place.

It was late afternoon when we returned to the campsite and decided to go swimming. We were the oldest people in the pool, by at least twenty years, perhaps thirty for me, but we made the best of it by splashing kids, playing water basketball, cheating, and just having a good time. Like bathing in chlorinated Oil of Olay, the years fell away as we played for hours in the cool water and hot sun.

Friendships develop quickly and our new pal, ten-year-old Calvin, decided to leave the pool when we did so he could look at our bikes and walk us into town to the grocery store.

Calvin was encouraged to spend the day at the pool so his mother only had to care for his four-year-old brother. I suppose the pool is an aqua day care of sorts; I never thought of it before. It was obvious he was a regular and that the staff were watching out for him.

Calvin and I were waiting in the lobby for Maureen to come out of the change room. Until Maureen appeared, there were some looks of concern, in our direction, by the pool staff. No doubt they were wondering who Calvin was with. I felt uncomfortable under their watchful eye. It made me think of the *trust no one* world we live in. It also made me thankful for small towns where overly friendly, maybe lonely, kids like Calvin can live and be watched over by everyone. Looks of concern vanished with Maureen's arrival, and a self-elected sentry lifeguard wished us a good afternoon.

Calvin liked us to talk about BC because that is where his father lived and where he, sometimes, visited. We all walked to the grocery store, near Calvin's house, and he awkwardly said goodbye to us. His verbal good bye was practised and firm, but his body was wavering, wanting to stay with us.

Assiniboia was a delightful people experience, an oasis of the best sort.

Consider the tail wind. To a motorist, a wind is just a wind is just a wind. Cyclists, however, take a more discriminating view of wind: Head wind, cross wind, or tail wind, it makes a difference. If life isn't easy, at least definitions are. Or are they? Are tailwinds *the helpful wind that blows on the day you aren't riding?*

On the west coast of Newfoundland we found that tail winds brought rain and head winds brought sunshine. In my experience as a commuter on the west coast of British Columbia, tail winds occur travelling west, until about 10 a.m. and travelling east after about 1 p.m. The lesson in BC is, look for work west of where you live. The lesson I learned on the prairies is, don't rely on a tail wind to solve all your problems.

On our rest day in Assiniboia I kept noticing flags blowing in the tail wind. I hoped for continued good weather and a tail wind. I hoped we would wake the next day and the flags would be worth saluting.

The flags were stuck to the poles when we got up. We packed our bags, looking over our shoulders to the talisman of tail winds. Still no movement. Then a breeze, a gust, a tail wind and we were off. One hundred kilometres, on loaded touring bikes, in four hours and twenty minutes. We could have gone further and

faster had Maureen not insisted on coasting down the many gulches we encountered that day and struggled back out of them in low gear.

No doubt about it, I was enjoying myself. Well, it began that way. A sort of Ya-Hoo feeling from deep inside. All is well; we'll be in Banff soon and meet our friends and everything is going to be okay. The tail wind was blowing my thoughts forward a whole month. I was travelling in the future and so, as we approached Ponteix, and I returned to the present, I was a little surprised to hear Maureen grunting.

The tail wind hadn't really helped anything but get us further down the road. Neither of us had slept well the night before; Maureen was tired, her knees hurt and, she admitted, she probably had pushed too hard to ride a hundred kilometres in less than four and a half hours.

When she whimpered for sympathy I suddenly felt exasperated. I began, but cut off, a sentence about wasting the potential energy gulches. I wanted to advise her, again, instead of coasting she *should* pedal downhill and she'd find herself half way up the other side before having to use her low gears.

When I start using the *should* word I stop what I'm saying and shut up a while. When I regained consciousness of where I was and how I felt, when I popped back from all the things that endless tail winds could have brought, I discovered I was in a bad mood, irritated by a large bug bite swelling on my ankle, tired and about to snap at Maureen. I suggested we find a motel in Ponteix to catch up on our sleep and find a little time away from each other.

Ponteix is not a big place so we didn't go our separate ways very long. We ended up together at the local museum inspecting a large collection of arrow heads from all over North America. Not as boring as it sounds. When all the types are side by side it's easy to see the differences and similarities. There were hundreds of arrow heads, long and narrow, short and squat and some that looked like rock chips.

There is something unique about every town if you take the time to look around. The next day in Gull Lake we discovered there was no lake. Maple Creek,

the following day, was much larger than we expected and, had it been any day but Sunday, the day everything is closed, we would have seen and done more there.

For the first time in many weeks, Maureen wanted to talk about what to do about jobs and housing when we got back home. Like the menu at the restaurant we were in, the choices were too great. We ordered predictable but different dishes and talked about typical but different work. Work, school, part time, full time, where to live. Find jobs first or housing? Courses or careers?

Not for the first time we concluded Maureen should seek temporary work in offices, until I got a job, then we would move to the area where I was working and she would continue to temp, or not, depending on how she felt.

Maureen seemed more at ease with a plan in place but still expressed concern that her life was lacking passion, purpose and commitment. Self-help books say having a cause is good for you. Maureen had no cause to fight for or subject to research. What could I say? Better no passion or purpose rather than exhausting oneself with a militant commitment to Friends of the Amoebas or something similar. Commitment sounds too fanatical to me anyway. I prefer the word devoted; it sounds more spiritual and contemplative.

We had plenty of time for contemplation in Walsh, Alberta. The temperature was in the mid 30°'s and there was a strong wind out of the south. Walsh is the eastern outpost for Provincial Tourism in Alberta. We stopped to collect a new set of guides and lingered because the air conditioning felt so good.

Next door at the Wild Rose Café we took a lunch break and gazed outdoors as the wind blew up clouds of road dust. When we returned to our bikes they had blown over with the force of the wind. Considering the headwind we decided to wait at the tourism office for the wind to die down. Not long after returning to the air conditioned information building, we both fell asleep on one of the couches in the lobby. We left to find a campsite when the building closed at 6 PM.

The town of Walsh was most likely named after Major James Morrow Walsh, of the NWMP, who gained notoriety after he allowed Sitting Bull, and more

than 1,000 Sioux, to stay in Canada despite news they had wiped out Custer in the Battle of Little Big Horn.

Sitting Bull stayed for five years; we stayed two days. Sitting Bull left because there weren't enough resources to provide his people with a decent life. The folks in small prairie towns are feeling the same thing. Service resources, both civic and health, are being centralised to save money. Many people are moving to larger towns in search of a decent life. Walsh, we were told at the Wild Rose Café, isn't what it used to be.

High winds kept us in Walsh the next day. Apparently, north of the highway there is a town of Walsh. All we ever saw was the highway, a Tourist building, a gas station/store/Wild Rose Café, a cross road, another gas station/store, a house and lastly, the campsite.

It rained through the night and we woke to a cool morning quite a bit different from the previous day. It was as if winter had been blown in by the high winds of the previous day. We sat around the campsite and talked a lot, planning our route through southern Alberta all the way to Calgary.

We set a tentative schedule for BC, which actually held, and we rejoiced in that *goin' home feeling*. Maureen's knees and arms were bothering her, so we didn't walk around much. We had a cheery conversation about work, and living places. Much better than our conversation in Maple Creek. We talked about the pro's and con's of job types and housing options and decided owning a home was the least likely option for the next few years.

Cross-Canada cyclist, and good friend, Sheila had cautioned us to avoid jumping right back into jobs, debts and responsibilities. She wished she and Thomas had taken more time to savour their experience. We kept that in mind, because we could feel the truth in it. Many times, in previous years, we returned from two-week vacations and, within a week, felt like it hadn't happened. Vacations seemed like a two week hiccup in work flow more than anything. We agreed we would take some time to consider and reflect and, as Sheila said, 'savour the experience.'

Medicine Hat was the largest city we had seen since Winnipeg. The city seemed to go on and on with strip malls and car lots. Nothing earth shattering about this urban design. We walked into a large shopping mall, with our bikes, and were promptly asked to leave. That really bugged me. Store merchants would never turn potential customers away, but mall management has no such problem. I went to the administration office, where they apologised for their policy, didn't offer to change it, but did offer to watch our bikes while we shopped. So, we moved our bikes to the office and went about our errands.

Maureen intended to shop for a few things, but she didn't get much further than a coffee shop and a group of women. I found a quiet place to record my third, and last, audio tape to accompany the large set of photos we had developed in Assiniboia. As with the previous two sets, I sent them to my Dad, who sent them to Mom, who then sent them to Maureen's Mom. We mailed the tape off, as well as a few cards, and decided to find a nice place for supper.

Near the shopping mall we spotted an Earls Restaurant. We eased our bikes into the lobby, the staff offered to take care of them, and we sat down to the most filling meals we had had in weeks. We paid for the meal using gift certificates Maureen's sister had given us as a bon voyage gift. A real thoughtful, easy-to-carry gift.

The municipally owned Gas City Campground, on the west side of town, had all the necessities. Showers, flush toilets and, thank goodness, hot air hand dryers. Fall had definitely arrived. As we packed up in the morning, I repeatedly returned to the washroom to warm my hands with the hot air. We wore our jackets and tights all day long as we rode south and east. Medicine Hat is on the Trans Canada Highway and, if we wanted, we could have been in Calgary in three days. Instead, we travelled on Highway 13, making our way across southern Alberta through Grassy Lake, Lethbridge and Fort McLeod before turning north, on Highway 2, passing through Granum and Nanton, ending up on the outskirts of Calgary on September 7.

Alberta winds change discernibly during the day. No wind to start, then head wind, ending the day in a crosswind. Maureen's knees continued to weaken and we began buying frozen vegetables to cool her knee and to use in a stir fry at supper.

We were counting the days to Banff and thoughts of riding without all our gear. Outside of Taber we weighed our bikes at a vehicle scale at the side of the road; Maureen's weighed 40 Kg and mine was 50Kg. That seemed a bit high to us, so we supposed the scale error was probably ± 10 Kg. or more.

Lethbridge is a very confusing town for cyclists. The tourist info booth is hard to find; it is kilometres out of the way, and located on a large thoroughfare posted "No Cycling." There are no bike route signs pointing to the alternate routes.

Getting in and out of the town was our greatest difficulty. The tourist info folks were out of maps, being late in the year, and had no idea what it was like to travel on bikes. One of the clerks suggested Maureen lift her bike over a metre high fence to get on the side road where we were allowed to ride.

When we eventually found a campground at Henderson Lake we were a little irritable. The campground, at \$16 a night plus \$1 per shower, was one of the more expensive ones. We were sandwiched between motor campers, and everyone was sandwiched between a busy road and a railroad. However, the staff were friendly, mostly young folks, and in a festive mood for Labour Day, the last long weekend of the year. For some of the staff it was their last day of work before heading back to school.

Most of the licence plates were from BC. Car decals and conversations led me to conclude the BC'ers were mostly from the Cranbrook area and visiting Lethbridge to buy school supplies because there is no sales tax in Alberta. I guess the price of gas doesn't factor into tax savings.

The people I talked to loved visiting Lethbridge because of the friendly people, the wonderful campground, the casino and all the shopping. Of course, they were getting around in cars and trucks.

In the washroom, where I was once again hanging around trying to warm up my hands the next morning, I met a fellow who had been to L'Anse aux Meadows

the previous year. We chatted about the east coast awhile, and a fellow from Cape Breton, now working in Medicine Hat, joined the conversation.

While I was chatting away in the heated washroom building, Maureen had got up, packed up, and was not-so-patiently waiting.

"I just about sent someone in there to see if you were okay," she said in a huff.

But that wasn't the only delay she encountered getting out of town. First we got lost a few times trying to find a place to buy some bagels. Then trying to find the highway on-ramp proved way more difficult than necessary. I concluded that the money Lethbridge was saving on highway signage was being used to make the roads rough.

Around towns, Maureen is always faster than I. Weighed down, and reluctant to speed up to slow down at intersections, I cruised along at a speed I felt I could stop at safely. Ahead of me, on the on-ramp to the highway leaving Lethbridge, Maureen was pulling away quickly and taking full advantage of the steep downhill. Ahead of us I could both see a major uphill that would take us up to plateau level.

Suddenly Maureen pulled over to the right as a piece of debris skittered across the road to the left and fell over the edge of the supported highway. Whatever it was, it landed with a clank, forty feet below.

It was also the cause of much foul language. Maureen had a flat, then we noticed the ripped tire, then we noticed her rim was bent. Since there was no safer place to sit and fix a flat, we spread our stuff at the roadside. Maureen took the gear off her bike to remove her back wheel and I, keeper of the folding tire, took all the stuff off my bike to access the spare tire. The spare tire began the trip in a visible and readily available location but, at some point, it went into a pannier and stayed there until the moment of maximum inconvenience.

I had to get out the spoke wrench and fiddle with Alfred's fine wheel building job. The build had lasted thousands of kilometres, without a wobble, from Lunenburg to Deathbridge. We were at the side of the overpass for an hour or so,

shielded from the wind, baking in the sun, bladders ready to burst and no place to pee but beside, or on to, traffic. We rode uncomfortably to a gas station in Coalhurst and, though we usually took turns watching the bikes while the other goes to the washroom, we leaned our bikes against the wall and elbowed each other to be first in the store.

It was *one of those days*, but it could have been worse. As we were about to leave Coalhurst, a freight train blocked our access to the highway. We laughed at the thought of being on the other side, trying to get into Coalhurst, because this train took fifteen minutes to pass.

We rode to Fort McLeod and stayed in a motel because Maureen had a vanity situation to attend to. In a few days we would be in Calgary and staying with Jackie, her friend from high school. They hadn't seen each other for nineteen years. Hair colour was definitely called for. No ifs ands or buts, the grey had to go. Maureen asked the woman at the front desk for a dark towel. The woman understood completely, and supplied a towel immediately.

Mission accomplished, Maureen's hair became a lovely burgundy brown. It looked quite nice in the sunlight except, when perspiring under her helmet the next day, tiny rivulets of reddish brown down the side of her face seemed to indicate a head injury.

Getting to Granum would have been a short ride from Fort McLeod had we not first attempted to get to Head Smashed in Buffalo Jump. The head wind to Head Smashed was so fierce, and the pain in Maureen's knee so acute, that we turned around and coasted at 21 kph back to the main highway.

The Granum Municipal Campground is run as a non-profit society by four women of that small town. When we arrived, the campsite was full of motorists, so the manager offered the use of the large lawn and cook shack for free. As we had done in Redvers and Grassy Lake, we set up the tent in the cook shack and enjoyed an evening out of the wind.

The next night in Nanton we once again set up in the cook shack, but this time it was to avoid wind and rain. We arrived in Nanton just ahead of a storm that

brought some heavy rain. Luckily, by the time the rain was falling, we were sitting snugly in the café of Emporium Antiques, drinking lattes, eating cookies, talking to the two delightful owners and watching our bikes get soaked. Good excuse to find a B&B. Too bad they were all sold out.

Nanton is a town reputed for antique stores. As we sat in the café, we talked to a few people who had come from miles around to check out all the stores. One couple had seen us in Taber a few days before and wanted to know about our trip. So, we told some stories and, while the owners were busy with other clientele, I poured a few coffees for others. When we were ready to pay our bill the owners told us that the coffee and cookies were on the house. Amidst our protests one of the owners asked us to accept their generosity and said, 'Make us one of your stories.'

Every two weeks we would phone home on the weekend, mostly to parents, to let them know we were still alive. I alternated between phoning my Mom or Dad. Maureen called her Mom and sometimes her sister. That night in Nanton, besides calling family, Maureen telephoned Jackie to get directions to her house in Calgary. Jackie couldn't talk long on the phone because she was colouring her hair.

It was bound to happen: we got rejected at a campground. Although the accommodation guide doesn't advertise the fact, the Pine Creek Campground does not take tents. We were on the southern edge of Calgary in a huge, sparsely populated, full facility campground. The staff didn't want us there, wouldn't even consider how tired we were and then recommended a campsite forty kilometres away. Hearing that, I knew we'd get no sympathy; they were too far from understanding or caring. Maureen, to state things mildly, was pissed off. I couldn't recall having seen her that agitated in a long time.

We were often surprised but accepting of generosity wherever we found it across the country. When we needed help I think we got help because most people know that crossing the country by bike is no easy task. We were living on kindness, curiosity, courtesy and generosity. To find all these qualities lacking was certainly a warning we had approached a big city.

Originally I didn't want to stay at a motel in Calgary because they were all listed at a minimum of \$100. Maureen didn't want to arrive one day early at Jackie's. Feeling there was no choice, we rode further into Calgary to find a cheap motel. Maureen spotted a Super 8 whose signs announced they had just opened, so we decided to check their rates.

Super 8 means \$108. Good thing I watch the bike while my travel agent cuts the deals. I would have left immediately, but not Maureen. Maureen says she exclaimed the price was too high. They lowered it to \$98. Maureen explained we were going to stay at a campground but they didn't want us. They lowered it to \$90. We had been travelling in the rain, the wind, across Canada. They lowered it to \$80. Maureen accepted the offer, and her faith in humanity – even in Calgary – was restored.

Maureen needed no more than 10 minutes to hustle me and the bikes into our room, go through her panniers for her bathing suit, change, wrap a towel around her and leave for the hot tub. After a soak and supper, we retired early and slept well.

The next day we took our fully loaded bikes on the LRT into Calgary. We had lunch downtown; Maureen shopped while I read and watched the bikes. In the early afternoon, we boarded the LRT again and rode to the end of the line. From there it was a few kilometres west to Jackie's house.

For two days I heard stories I hadn't heard before and stories which sounded familiar but had different endings. Most conversations began with, "Have you heard from..." "What ever happened to..." "Did you know that..." "Do you remember the night..."

On September 10 we left Calgary, heading for our rendezvous with Terry, Linda and a 30-foot recreational vehicle in Banff. We camped in Cochrane, Bow Valley and finally Banff, for two nights, the first by ourselves and the second with Terry and Linda.

Cochrane is about 30 kilometres from Calgary. Not far, but Maureen really needed a short day. This was the worst day of her three day cold. Clouds were rolling in with the headwind, so we camped at Rivers Edge Municipal Park and took it easy.

Once again we set our tent up inside of the cook shack. It's a good thing we did, because it rained like heck that night. By morning the clouds were all gone and the sun was attempting to warm up the world. I woke to the sound of motorists scraping ice off their windows. Besides window ice, the fresh snow on foot hills was the main topic of conversation among the campers.

"Two more sleeps in the tent," Maureen said as we jogged on the spot to warm up. The next morning, in Bow Valley Park, there was frost everywhere. I had to go for a brisk fifteen minute walk before getting on my bike. My hands were freezing for the second day in a row, and I decided to buy winter gloves as soon as possible. Though our winter jackets and pants had made it to Jackie's, my gloves were not in that parcel.

Beginning in Cochrane, the Rocky Mountains were finally within sight. At first they appeared as a grey serrated line on the horizon. Over the next three days, as we drew closer to Banff, our excitement grew with the mountains at our side. By the time we arrived in Bow Valley Park, we were in the constant companionship of young rugged mountains, strutting their strata, creating cooler later mornings and earlier nights. Mountains sentinels to blue-green, white capped streams along the roadsides.

"STOP," Maureen yelled, "I want you to take my picture right here, LOOK! I have goose bumps."

Then she was quiet for a minute. "What is it? What's wrong?" I asked.

"I just can't believe we're here," she said. "I've wanted to ride the Rockies for so long and we are actually here, and I'm riding them and they're beautiful."

We had been in Banff National Park for less than two minutes, bought park passes at the gate, and were riding around a curve in the road when Maureen was overcome with the joy of the moment. There, directly in front of us, was a picture perfect postcard view of a mountainous peak, white capped at the top, set against the crisp cloudless blue sky of fall.

Maureen silently contemplated the view and I silently contemplated Maureen. Since Calgary, with a cold, sore knees and elbow, Maureen had not been

an enthusiastic traveller. I had no idea she was going to be so excited, and it felt so great to be travelling with someone who was enjoying herself again. After a few moments of taking in the view, Maureen turned around so I could photograph her big smile, her loaded bike and the mountains she loves so much in the background.

Canmore was warm and welcoming when we arrived around lunch time. A tourist town like Banff used to be 25 years ago, Canmore has a short main street with lots of shops and lots of people walking around. We sat in front of a bagel and coffee shop, ate, drank and people watched. Before we left, I bought a pair of winter gloves.

Maureen was smiling all day; she was over her cold, enjoying the good weather and in awe of the mountain view. We rode into Banff, did some grocery shopping and made our way to Tunnel Mountain Campsites at the edge of town. The air was thick with the smell of livestock and I asked Maureen, a farm girl, if she thought it smelled like cows. She didn't notice any unusual smells. In the campground we found Elk. Elk everywhere. Behind our campsite there was one male, with a hefty set of antlers, maintaining a harem of six females. They were fascinating to watch, though they weren't really doing anything but standing around. I did discover that elk, in large groups and during mating season, are well worth staying up wind of.

The use of the campground food locker is mandatory to discourage bears from ransacking the place. It seemed that crows were the largest consumer of ill gotten goods that night. Our last night in the tent for the remainder of our trip, our last night alone for a week, we celebrated by overeating. After settling in our sleeping bags for the night, the smell of supper on our breadths, we hoped bears didn't like the smell of garlic. As it turned out, the only growls we heard in the campground that night came from our stomachs.

Neither of us found Banff to be the quaint little place we thought it would be. It is in a picturesque setting, but it also has more designer fashion stores, more restaurants and gift shops than I care to see in four months, let alone four hours.

In the late afternoon we returned to the campsite and waited for Terry and Linda to arrive in the recreational vehicle. Maureen had telephoned Linda the previous night and Linda warned, "Wait until you see this thing, it's BIG."

Terry and Linda arrived in the early evening. We hugged them and welcomed them, I was a little teary eyed to see them, Maureen was outright crying.

By selling our home, we freed ourselves from home owner slavery and gave ourselves a chance to be happy. We discovered that freedom and happiness were within our grasp, all we had to do was reach for it.

Chapter 10.

BC and Before Cycling

I was laid off prematurely. I would have appreciated receiving my full wages until April 99, a month before our trip but, as luck would have it, I was laid-off the October before we left. Fortunately I was eligible for employment insurance income and classes at an entrepreneur/venture centre where I put together a business plan for a cycle touring company.

Bicycling Campout was born to service the needs of novice bicycle campers and create a pre-cross-Canada business diversion. I estimated profits of up to four thousand dollars. Luckily, I only lost about eight hundred. As a pilot project to assess the needs of novice bike campers and determine whether profits were possible, it was a success. I can confidently state, I will not be going into the cycle touring business.

While I sought venues, sponsors and participants for the campout, Maureen did the bulk of the planning to sell and move our house and goods. The house was on the market a worrisome eight weeks. Everything hinged on the sale of the house, and thankfully we had to drop the asking price only once. With mixed feelings we signed the house over to the new owners, took their cheque and went on a spending spree.

We delayed the purchase of air tickets and some new lighter pieces of camping equipment until the deal closed. An era ending and a new one beginning.

We didn't get emotional about leaving the house until the last moment. By Wednesday, morning May 19 we were tired of waiting for the last day to arrive. All the packing and moving done, except a car full of last minute stuff, we took the house keys off our chain ring and put them on the kitchen counter. Holding hands we went through every room in the house saying something about what each room would be remembered for.

Other than the washrooms, the master bedroom was the only room upstairs we used daily, so we started there. My bathroom, the ensuite, had held an icon of love in the form of a dry bouquet of roses. Every day I wished to throw them out. Icons of love, when thickly coated with dust, ravaged by humidity and two cats, are not a pretty sight. I didn't want to insult Maureen by chucking them out – finally I did.

When we moved into the house, we thought the master bedroom walk-in-closet was so large that it could never be filled. A year before we moved out I moved my clothing to the second bedroom closet to make room for Maureen's bulging wardrobe.

The main bathroom, a.k.a. Maureen's bathroom, underwent more therapeutic painting and wall papering than any room in the house. The only one of our three bathrooms that had a tub, it became Maureen's little refuge. The two smaller bedrooms upstairs, one for hobbies and one for guests, looked like they had never been used.

The living room looked huge without furniture; we stood by the fireplace where we often gathered ourselves, the cats, and lots of nibbly food on the coffee table, to spend the entire evening being together. We agreed we would miss not having a fireplace.

The kitchen, now void of fridge magnets, rows of mugs on the top shelf, appliances on the counter and, for once, the cupboards all closed, hardly looked like

we had ever lived there. Barely large enough for two people to work in, we often found up to ten people in the kitchen during parties.

The last washroom, just off the kitchen, was a pickle of a place. One day in a moment of disgust I tried to flush a jar full of mouldy pickles. The pickles plugged the toilet and wouldn't budge using the plunger. I removed the toilet thinking I could reach underneath with my hands and pick the peck of pickles. My hands were too thick to reach up into the toilet, so I asked Maureen for her help. I leaned the toilet back against the wall and she put her hand up the toilet and announced she could feel one. Are you sure it's a pickle? I asked. She laughed so hard I thought she'd hurt herself.

Downstairs, in the laundry room, we recalled a recent sewer backup that I had probably caused by flushing a litre of cat litter at a time. The double garage, one of my favourite rooms, was home to seven bikes and all the tools to keep them going. I could never convince Maureen to park the car on the street so I could have more room in the garage.

We got in the car, reversed out of the garage, and then Maureen walked back into the house with the garage door opener and put it on the kitchen counter with the rest of the keys. She returned to the garage, pushed the garage door button and ran out of the garage, sealing the house so we could not return. We sat in the car watching the door close for the last time. That is when we got a little teary eyed. Yes, we were really doing this.

All our furniture was at Maureen's Mom's and the cats were with my Mom. We supplied my mom with four months of cat food and litter. We arranged to have a vet tech visit Mom once a week to clean the litter box, comb fur, cut nails and, if there is anything wrong, take the cats to the vet.

The week between leaving the house and flying to St.John's went pretty quickly. *Bicycling Campout* proceeded from West Vancouver to Porpoise Bay with twenty-five people. The weather was great and we all had a great time bike camping. Maureen and I seemed to have everything we needed for a four-month journey.

After the long weekend we stayed in Vancouver a night, then in Mission and then in Richmond before leaving for St. John's. We tried to wrap everything up on the Tuesday, made a quick visit to my Dad, my Mom and then to the travel agent, where we found out our flight from St.John's to St.Anthony had been cancelled and we would have to make alternate arrangements when we got to Newfoundland.

In Mission, at Maureen's Mom's, we slept in our bed for one last time and left the next morning at 6 a.m. for Vancouver.

We rode our bikes around the seawall from Stanley Park and to Granville Island. We had lunch looking over the water; it was warm, tourists were milling about, and toddlers were alternately feeding and chasing the pigeons.

With the panniers on our bikes we looked like tourists, so we fit right in. Maureen said she felt decadent taking a leisurely ride through Vancouver. Neither of us could recall riding the seawall together; usually when we were in Vancouver, we are on errands or visiting friends.

After lunch Maureen and I rode to Doug and Susan's house to disassemble and pack the bikes into their hard-shell bike case. It took two hours. Fenders, racks, panniers, sleeping bags and all the rest of our gear went either in a large box or one of two duffel bags. We had a lot of stuff.

Doug drove us to the airport to store our stuff, and then to our airport hotel. He stayed with us until we had successfully checked in, gave us each a hug and said he was jealous. We stood silently looking at each other for a few moments. Sometimes good bye, good luck doesn't seem like enough. He returned to his car and drove off. All three of us had become conscious of, and embarrassed by, our tears. We watched his car until it was out of sight.

The opposite occurred in Banff. We watched every RV that came into sight. When we finally recognised Terry and Linda ahead of thirty feet of recreational vehicle, we jumped from the picnic table and rushed to greet them. I think they were unprepared for how happy we were to see them.

Terry and I met in high school in the early 70's. As with the other people I still see from high school, we were in choral class, the easiest and most social subject in the whole school. During grades 11 and 12 we were two, of four or five, Back Bass Boys (BBB) known for our exceedingly good looks, great voices, and self-delusion. Terry, who was always really good with things automotive, was one of the few people I went to school with who owned a car. Terry ended up driving everyone, everywhere. It was with Terry's approval that I got my first job, other than paper routes, at the A&W he worked at. For many years after high school, when we bumped into each other occasionally, we got caught up about who was doing what and where. A year or more would pass between these sessions. Then, about five years before our trip, Maureen and I met him outside of a sports equipment store and he introduced us to Linda. We quickly discovered Linda was an avid, well-travelled cyclist and made plans to get together for a ride.

At first the four of us rode together mostly on day trips, once on a camping weekend. Since Terry and I were both busy on summer weekends, Maureen and Linda began arranging cycling and lunch dates between themselves. The four of us continued to meet up for supper, but rarely rode together.

The arrival of Terry and Linda marked the end of carrying camping gear. With our tent and cooking gear stored, our sleeping bags on the bunk and the miscellany of clothing and toiletries close at hand, but not on bike, we rode for a week with a pannier for clothing and food. Terry lit campfires on many of the evenings, and we enjoyed mugs of hot chocolate, knowing the washroom was close and warm.

Terry and I, both early risers, quickly got in a routine of going for morning walks while the girls slept in. Getting the who, what and where of fellow classmates out of the way in the first day, we got caught up with each other's inner lives. We figured out what each other had figured out so far. Terry and I discovered, on our morning walks, that we share many of the same attitudes and thoughts about life, love and work. Our experiences were different but it appeared they were two different routes to the same place.

We had some differences of opinion and insights, based on different experiences, but it seemed we often provided evidence to each other that bolstered feelings rather than challenged them. I wonder if, sure as puberty, we all come to the same thoughts no matter where our lives have taken us.

We talked about teachers of long ago and teachers of last week. We talked about jobs, work, careers, occupations and the differences between all of them. One day we talked silently about the joy of being outdoors. We were standing on a bridge watching a river rush beneath our feet: birds chirped above our head and, on the bank of the river, birds were bathing in the early morning light. Squirrels had run across our path before we came to the bridge and now, on the thinning fall branches of trees, one squirrel was warning us to keep away. The branches of the tree shook with each body-shaking cheep of warning. The branches shook, another leaf fell into the river, floated beneath our feet and made us even more part of the process of renewal. There was no reason for Terry to verbalise his thoughts, I could tell by his smile at the squirrel, his attention to the river below and his content easy pose leaning against the hand rail, that he was enjoying the moment. Something like 'Hey it's nice here,' would be totally unnecessary and an understatement.

Life and love must be actively maintained, Terry and I agreed. At one time, we both discovered, we had thought we were being active and participating in our relationships. Then we discovered that maintaining a house, doing chores, etc., was not the same as maintaining a relationship. What a shock to discover they aren't the same thing.

It's an easy trap to ride into. Earlier in our trip I had made the maintenance mistake. At each campsite, at the end of each long day for Maureen, I said 'Just rest, I'll make supper, I'll work on your bike, I'll clean up,' instead of saying 'You're my hero, I love you, you did great, I can't make supper until you hug me for a while, I need you.'

Maureen wasn't feeling all that well physically, perhaps even mentally. Her knees and elbows continued to give her problems, so we took a rest day, after riding to Lake Louise from Banff, to do some sight seeing. With the company of bus loads

of people, we walked along the shore of Lake Louise, had lunch at the Chateau and took many photos of each other.

After our rest day we rode from Lake Louise to Golden, crossing the Continental Divide on an old section of Highway 1A, now closed to motor traffic. To get to the 1A we had to climb almost up to Lake Louise, ride around some barriers and – voila, open road. It was a delightful, mostly downhill, scenic trip on which we often coasted three abreast.

After a few days of riding in great weather, surrounded by ever-changing mountain scenes and making a point to stop occasionally and look behind for equally stunning views, we all stopped saying, 'Wow, look at that!' to each other. We each enjoyed the scenery in quiet personal reverie.

Terry had the toughest job. He spent the day driving ahead to find lunch places he could pull over and wait in. Then we would see him again in whatever campgrounds we agreed on. He did the groceries, sani-station stuff, camp set-up and take-down. We rode.

We don't have many pictures of Terry, either. While Linda, Maureen and I were taking each other's photos at the Continental Divide or Rogers Pass, he was setting up camp. Granted it was a little easier for him to get through the mountain passes.

The trip through Rogers Pass, from Golden to Glacier National Park, was our toughest day. Road construction on one of the two long grades we climbed that day had us sharing narrow lanes, without shoulders, with holiday and truck traffic.

We rode safely through five long dark dirty snow shed tunnels because of construction work. Construction workers were rock scaling the cliffs above the highway holding traffic back every twenty minutes, for twenty minutes. We waited with the rest of the traffic and began our ascent to the first snow shed. Twenty minutes later, as we approached the snow sheds, traffic died down. We cleared all the sheds in twenty minutes without any motor traffic in the tunnels at the same time as us. Beautifully timed!

Glacier National Park was one of the best parks we visited. Set at the foot of a glacier, the campground was surrounded by huge trees and because it didn't cater to large RV's, the camp sites were small, level gravel lots instead of barren gravel wastelands.

There were hook ups for water and sewer but no electricity. The sites had enough clean washrooms that there wasn't a line up, and best yet, there were lots of friendly people. We saw more people sitting around this campground, at night and in the morning, than any other campground. We supposed the lack of electricity was forcing travellers outdoors to build fires or read books. A lot people dropped by our site to borrow the axe Terry brought.

The next morning Linda and I rode off to Revelstoke, while Maureen and Terry followed in the RV an hour later. At our lunch stop, Linda and I discovered Maureen and Terry had bets on our arrival time. We arrived midway between their two guesses.

Linda and I continued to Revelstoke and found our very relaxed-looking support crew reading the Saturday newspaper at the side of the road. Maureen was looking at job ads and places to live. After a meal and groceries in Revelstoke, we drove to Yard Creek Provincial Park. The weather had been good all week, and we expected Yard Creek would be busy but we found the park sparsely populated and half-closed for the season. The day ended with one of the luxuries of RV life, oven-baked lasagne for supper.

Our last full day together Linda rode her first metric century as we made our way to Ellison Provincial Park in Vernon. Maureen rode the first half on bike through to Enderby where Terry waited with lunch. Because of a sore elbow and knee she decided it was much wiser to ride with Terry for the rest of the day.

In the morning, Terry and I had the last of our daily walks while the girls slept in. We went down to the beach, kicked some sand, climbed some rocks and waited for the sun to rise. Terry stretched his arms to the sky to feel the first rays of sunlight come over the eastern hills. It looked like a great way to welcome the day.

We returned to camp and the four of us cleaned the RV in preparation to return it. Each end has its own beginning.

How quickly some weeks end. In one sense Banff seemed like it was weeks ago. In another sense, it seemed like we were together for only a few days. The conundrum of time is that it is measured linearly but not experienced that way.

The four of us drove to Kelowna, had lunch together one last time, and returned the RV. At the rental lot we disgorged, more than unpacked, the RV. Our tent, sleeping bags and cooking paraphernalia, as well as all of Terry and Linda's stuff were packed, I mean PACKED, in Terry's truck. We said good bye much more sedately than we had said hello.

We checked into a motel in Kelowna and almost immediately went out for a walk having spotted a well-known book store chain and coffee shop across the street. Once again we found comfort in an old routine.

The next day we rode 60 kilometres to Penticton to stay with Maureen's sister Jean, husband Dennis and daughter Miranda. Jean made a chocolate cake that said *Congratulations*. We stayed up late talking about our trip and got up early the next morning for the 120 kilometre ride to Princeton.

The first half of the trip was hilly, and the second half was flat as the prairies. We travelled this same route by bike a few years before and didn't make it all the way to Princeton. We had to stop at a noisy roadside provincial park so Maureen could find some cover from the intense heat of the Okanagan summer sun. Warm as it was, this time we made it all the way to Princeton and found a motel with a cool indoor swimming pool.

Maureen was anxious about the ascent to Sunday Summit from Princeton. In her mind, the push for the summit would be long and arduous. True, Princeton lay at the bottom of a steep mountain highway, which has, in the past, taxed many an automobile's ability to climb at more than 40 kph.

Maureen's anxiety reminded me of the night before I rode that section for the first time. I too was worried about getting to Manning Park Lodge, but it turned out to be easy. I tried to assure her, without invalidating her concerns, that the road

was a pretty consistent grade, easy to pedal, the views were great and the whole experience would be wonderful. I couldn't lie and say that it would be over before she knew it. I prepared for a long day.

We averaged 11 kph, which was pretty good considering the length of the grade over much of the 66 kilometres to Manning Park Lodge. That was about as fast as I had done it with a friend two years before. Maureen was very pleased with herself and another milestone in her cycling career. Having completed the climb to Manning Park, the remainder of the trip was almost all downhill to Victoria.

It certainly was downhill almost all the way to Hope the next day. Light rain and a head wind prevented us from obtaining speeds above 70 kph. But, including stops for photos and a rest stop for hot chocolate at the Westgate restaurant, we were on the road only four hours. We checked into the Skagit Motel in Hope and went to the pool and hot tub for the rest of the afternoon.

It rained all night; wind buffeted the windows and howled in the trees. At first light I peered through the window and saw rain falling at a 45-degree angle. I went back to bed and pulled the blankets over my head, thinking about the day before. Maureen had complained that her legs ached during the down hills. What pain would she suffer today? What would I have to listen to all day besides wind and rain?

As Maureen had psyched herself down preparing for the ride up Sunday Summit, I was psyched down for our long day of travel to her mother's house in Mission. I reluctantly got out of bed again and prepared to leave. The rain and wind had tapered off considerably and the only formidable, but short, task of the day was to climb Mt. Woodside's 11 percent grade. Thankfully it had been re-paved; the lines had been re-painted and the shoulder was smooth and wider than I recall. The weather had changed for the better, and we stopped to strip a layer of clothing off.

Before long, we were in Mission, welcomed by Maureen's Mom, surrounded by all our furniture and going through our mail. Sleeping on our own bed was as delightful as I hoped it would be. I often make fun of my cats when they get ready to sleep by walking in tight circles and tromping down whatever is the bed du

jour. They look so determined it was hard not to make fun of them. I fluffed my pillow, like I usually do, separated my quilt from Maureen's, pulled it over my shoulder, lifted my legs so it would drape over my feet, then settled in on my left side. There, all done now, I was ready to sleep.

Looking at all our boxes, bookcases, couches and countless other things, I commented that we had way more stuff than I remembered; Maureen agreed, "Unreal isn't it?" Un-needed was my thought.

Our second last day was a lot of fun. From Mission we were heading to Delta to stay with Sheila, Thomas and their one-year-old Isaac. Along the way we rode to Langley, where we were met by nine Randonneurs and escorted to Fort Langley. Among the group who met us were Val, Alex and Doug, all of whom had been following our trip closely on the website.

The BC Randonneur Club was conducting its AGM brunch in Fort Langley. Though Maureen and I haven't participated in any of their events longer than 200K, we know most of these intrepid marathon cyclists. The restaurant was full of cyclists in spandex and soon the spandex was full of the buffet.

There is no clothing as highly suited to riding and eating as stretch nylon. So many times in my life I've attended a brunch wearing my Sunday best, only to wish I was wearing clothing that was more accommodating to the quantity of food I was eating.

When the business part of the AGM began, Maureen and I left for Delta to stay with Sheila and Thomas. Sheila and Thomas had crossed Canada, England and South Africa by bike. They were pretty good judges of how we felt, besides tired. Maureen finally had someone to with whom to compare anatomical injury notes. Thomas and I talked about forsaking pace for peace.

Our Last Day

Maureen and I tried to view each day of our trip as a new beginning, but it was hard not to count the last sleeps, the last meals and the last kilometres of a previous life.

Maureen had a sore elbow, sore knees and was ready for the trip to be over a month ago. For Maureen, the last day was exciting, and the destination was of supreme importance. The cliché about *the journey is more important than the destination* did not ring true for her on that day.

I was lost in reverie most of the morning. Four months previously, on the 27th of May, we landed in St. John's. A month later we were in Halifax, a month later we were in Kingston, another into Ponteix and finally in Victoria on September 27.

I thought about the physical world of linear time and linear distance, and I thought about the non-linear world of mental activity. On our last day, my mind was travelling 3000 kilometres an hour, but my body was travelling to Victoria at 30 kilometres an hour. As we hastened to the ferry, familiar landmarks interrupted my thoughts. 'Are we here already?' I said aloud at the ferry terminal; it seemed like we had left Thomas and Sheila's only moments before.

Cycling across Canada allowed us to reflect on partnerships with each other and our community. One reason so many people are looking for meaning(s) in their lives is because they are living apart from their community rather than a part of it. Generosity, we felt, was at the heart of small communities, and in both PEI and Saskatchewan the generosity of deeds and words gave us a sense of belonging. We were adopted, accepted and made to feel welcome.

However, in communities struggling with the new economy, as many small towns across Canada were, we felt no sense of belonging. People in small towns like St. Anthony, Newfoundland and Walsh, Alberta, are constantly under threat of losing jobs and services. It is easy to tell the difference between *surviving* communities and *doing great* communities by the generosity in attitude, energy and interest of the people hanging around the stores, gas stations and restaurants.

Travelling by bike allowed us to meet a lot of people, have a lot of fun and do a lot of thinking. We learned to be more accepting of strangers and happier with each other. Doubts about whether we were doing the right thing, by selling the house, etc., dissipated as we came to enjoy life on the road and a pace set by our own rhythms.

We came to realise that everything we did was inseparably therapeutic in both the physical and mental sense. We knew, before we left, that enjoyable cycling days lead to stimulating mental days. On our trip we learned that stimulating mental days led to enjoyable cycling days. Mere thoughts could supersede headwinds, rain and rough pavement. It's nice to have an option when being driven to despair by the environment. Some call it attitude, some call it motivation, but I call it an option to be able to create great days, in the mental world, when the charms of the physical world are lacking.

In Newfoundland we struggled, physically and mentally, to find joy in what we were doing. After a rest in Prince Edward Island and riding with friends in Nova Scotia, getting to New Brunswick was a breeze. It was our first mental tailwind. In New Brunswick a re-evaluation of our attitudes about each other and our trip led to a harmonious understanding of trip expectations.

In sickness and in health we travelled Québec and Ontario. The bus trip to Manitoba was like a ride to freedom. It allowed us to ride to Banff at an easy rate and bypass the nastiest bit of traffic in Canada.

On the Prairies, when we had no doubt of successfully reaching Victoria, our thoughts went beyond the trip and we began contemplated housing, work and money. We didn't know where we would end up living or working, but we looked forward to living in a smaller house, spending less time at work and buying fewer goods.

We resolved to simplify, to be frugal, to rent until it made sense to buy and to re-evaluate what a sensible purchase was. We decided that enough was enough. We didn't need three bedrooms, three bathrooms, a stuffed wardrobe, more socks and T-shirts than you could wear in a month. We didn't need stuffed shelves of paperbacks, vinyl records, cassettes, coffee mugs, more crystal stemware than the Governor General, ten-year-old magazines, recipe books for one recipe and a host of electrical kitchen appliances that could be replaced by a knife.

What we needed was a little sanity and not much else.

We had to hurry to catch the 11 a.m. ferry to Victoria because we had been talking to Sheila and Thomas about what to do next. Sheila believed rushing back to work, as they did after their fourteen-month bike trip, would be the wrong thing to do. Time was needed to savour, to learn, to grow and to take advantage of new perspectives gained during the trip.

As we approached the ferry terminal, the booth attendant leaned out of her window and asked if we were going to Victoria. She explained that the ferry was leaving as soon as the baggage-car was aboard. Maureen paid the fees and we rode as quickly and safely as we could down the berth and on to the ferry seconds ahead of the baggage car. The doors clanged shut and we got underway before our bikes were secured.

Once aboard the ferry, my thoughts turned to the Vikings and the difference a thousand years make. They lived under upturned boats until sod huts were built. They lived in smoky rooms, with little food, struggled all their lives and died early, probably worn out. Seven hundred and fifty years later, people were trying, once again, to live where the Vikings failed to endure. Boats ferried Acadians and loyalists to new lands and to death at sea. Boats ferried soldiers up the St. Lawrence to do battle in Upper Canada, and now we were shipping ourselves to Victoria to end an old life and to start a new one.

I thought about the land in between waterways and the covered wagons, ferries of the prairies, that were still in use 100 years ago. The look of transportation and housing has changed a lot in 1,000 years, even in 100, but the struggle to survive has not.

After an hour and a half of contemplation, the ferry doors opened again and we embarked on our last 36 kilometres. For the first time in weeks we rode without our jackets and tights. It was a bright summer day and the warm, ocean-scented tail wind allowed us to arrive in Victoria an hour earlier than Maureen had estimated.

We stopped to buy sandwiches so we could picnic on the lawn beside the Mile 0 sign at Beacon Hill Park. Maureen was the happiest she had been in weeks, and she had been pretty happy lately. During the last two weeks she often asked me

how we should celebrate our accomplishment. A night at the plush Empress Hotel? Supper at a fancy place? She was in a mood to celebrate. With a joy in her voice I could not share, Maureen had announced how many *sleeps to the end* every night since Princeton.

I enjoyed the tailwind, the weather and Maureen's happy disposition while struggling with *the end*. I didn't want the trip to end; I wanted to keep going. I didn't want to face the unknown and unplanned post ride life. When in doubt, go through the motions and hope the emotions follow. That's what I did and it worked. At the end, holding Maureen in my arms, I forced thoughts of future uncertainty out of my mind and concentrated on living life in the current moment. I breathed in the day, smiled and acknowledged – we had done it. We kissed in front of four bus loads of tourists who waited politely for their turn to be photographed beside the Mile 0 sign.

"We did it," Maureen said, sniffing back tears and hugging me so close her chin was on my shoulder. We gazed a few moments at our bikes leaning against the Mile 0 sign. A journey ends and a journey begins.

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June 4, 1874 Behind us lay the works of man...

August 4, 1874 You throw the reins on your horse's neck...

Canadian Illustrated News pg 97

Appendices

Appendix 1 contains the 8 email updates Maureen composed, as we crossed Canada, to provide more details than our web journal. Though our website had photos and short journal entries, some of our friends with email did not have web access. As well, connected family members found our updates more newsy than the web journal and better for distribution to unconnected family members.

Appendix 2 contains our 104 website journal entries.

Appendix 3 is a list of computer, bicycle and camping equipment used during the trip.

Appendix 1 - Email Updates sent by Maureen

Newfoundland

Fri 28/05/99 3:57 PM

Hi Everyone,

Yesterday was a long day, but we are finally here! The Canada 3000 flight was pretty good, the best part being that they do not charge for sporting equipment... so the bikes (in a large hard shell case), a big box and 2 large duffel bags went without extra charge.

We stayed at the airport hotel last night and this morning built up the bikes, packed up and headed into town – in the pouring rain (bouncing back off the pavement rain) – certainly appreciated the Gore-Tex jacket, pants, socks, gloves ...

The Compton House B & B is a lovely restored home and cottage. The rooms all have a modem jack, so we will be able to send and receive messages regularly while we're here.

Tue 01/06/99 6:02 PM

The web site has been updated.

We've added a bunch of photos and some stories from our few days here in St. John's. It's been a luxurious start to our trip – the B&B was really cosy, the people are so friendly, and except for the rain on Friday, the weather has been really good. Thanks to Val, Alex and Gerard for your planning help and to Terry and Denise for showing us St. John's!

We are flying out Wednesday morning to St. Anthony to see the Viking settlement at L'Anse aux Meadows and then begin our trek down the west coast of NFLD through Gros Morne park.

Fri 04/06/99 6:13 PM

Boy oh boy is it windy here!

We flew from St. John's to St. Anthony on Wednesday, the airstrip is out in the middle of nowhere, 50 km from the town site. So how long do you think it took us to ride into town? Can you believe it was 5 hours!!!! The winds never let up and we were happy to hit 20km/hr pedalling down hill. We saw two moose and one caribou. The only campsite is 7km from town and without fuel for the stove, we kept going into St. Anthony. We stayed at the Vinland Motel, had dinner in their restaurant and were asleep almost right away. It was foggy and wet on Thursday morning, so we thought, well there must be bus tours out to the Viking Settlement. Nope – the only guy willing to do it was going to charge us \$120. So we hopped on the bikes and rode out here – 40 km, rolling terrain sounds easy right? Nope, this was over 3 hour ride. Both days reminded us of our ride to Bamfield 2 years ago – never ending rolling hills. We were wearing more layers of clothing than in January at home. The wind was blowing from the north east off the icebergs and it was stinking cold. We know it wasn't below zero because it was still rain, but this morning there was slush on the ground and there's still snow in the hills. People are saying this is an early spring!!! The wind chill at the airport on Thursday morning was -9. Linda, are you glad you're not here????

We arrived at St. Lunaire wet, cold and hungry. The owners of the store very kindly made us a cup of tea, we bought some food and warmed up. After St. Lunaire the wind changed and was at our backs for a few kilometres. We are staying at a lovely B&B in Hay Cove, 1km from the Viking Settlement at L'Anse aux Meadows, which we visited today. Also got back into St. Anthony today with Thelma, the owner of the B&B and went to the Grenfell Museum. Grenfell was the doctor from England who brought medical service to Labrador and Northern Newfoundland in the early 1900's. Everyone we speak to seems to know us – oh, you're the cyclists we passed on the highway. Saw a BC license plate in the parking lot at L'Anse aux Meadows - a couple from Swartz Bay.

Tomorrow we're back on the bikes.

Bruce and Maureen Mol

Québec

Sun 18/07/99 6:30 PM

Nous sommes arrivee dans le Provençe de Québec Vendredi le 16 Juilliet. Nous cycle trois jours a 100km par jour et nous arrivee Québec City aujourd'hui. Tres poooped.

Ok that's almost the extent of my high school French. "Ou est le salle du bain?" has been useful.

We've updated the website last week in Fredericton.

We have left the Maritimes behind us (Newfoundland seems so long ago). New Brunswick was pretty easy riding, except for the first day out of Saint John. We had more sun than rain, more tail winds than headwinds and more downhill than uphill, we met several other cross country cyclists, and rode the Trans Canada Trail from Edmunston to Rivière du Loup. It was difficult to get accurate information and the N.B. campground guide was the most difficult to use.

A few things we've noticed: Flag Flying – almost everyone has flags, the Canadian flag, provincial flags, the Acadian flag in parts of NS and PEI and occasionally the US or British flag; Lawn Ornaments are everywhere: smurfs, deer, beetles, butterflies, you name it. In southern Nova Scotia and New Brunswick there were more flowers, hanging baskets and yards are well kept; most yards are not fenced and the yards are huge. Every community has at least one church and usually a cemetery along with it. In New Brunswick there is a lot of real estate for sale.

In Québec, everyone smokes – everywhere! There's big signs in the grocery stores reminding people not to smoke. There's ashtrays everywhere and 'non smoking' sections in restaurants are almost non existent. We stayed on the south side of the St. Lawrence river and followed highway 132 from Rivière du Loup to Lévis and took the ferry across to Québec City. This is probably the best highway we have been on for 'services' that coffee drinking cyclists need. There are regular rest areas and lots of campgrounds. In some places, it is flat as a pancake in the middle of farmland and

other times we were right along the river. It is really neat riding along to the sound of church bells! Yesterday it appeared there was some sort of organised ride (looked like a Pedalsport type ride except we didn't see the food stops...) and we saw lots of cyclists. Today we saw two guys, also touring, with some sort of stereo blasting away. We've both had rear flats, Bruce's by the valve and mine a pinch flat.

Tomorrow we are going to explore the city and Tuesday we'll be heading towards Ottawa, hoping to be there next weekend.

Bruce and Maureen Mol

Ontario

Thu 29/07/99 7:33 AM

Hope everyone is having a good summer!

We left Québec City on Tuesday July 20th and arrived in Ottawa on Saturday July 25th, and yesterday we arrived at Bruce's aunt's in Kingston. (No update on the web page yet)

Québec City is very beautiful and interesting. We walked all around the old town, including Petit Champlain, the oldest street in North America, and went on the guided tour of the Citadel. From Québec City we stayed on the North side of the St. Lawrence river and rode through farmlands to Trois-Rivières. After Trois-Rivières the highway was busier and the shoulders were inconsistent until we reached Montebello. There were lots of big trucks and without shoulders, I hit the gravel a few times. Friday afternoon was the worst as not only were there lots of trucks on the road, but also the people getting out of town for the weekend. The speed limits are higher here - a two lane highway without shoulders and the speed limit is generally 90kph. We were glad to end that day! We camped at the marina at Montebello on Friday night. On Saturday we stopped in to have a look at the Chateau Montebello. It is truly amazing. The building is made of logs shipped from BC and there's a huge stone fireplace in the middle of the lobby.

There are many bridges from Hull to Ottawa and we chose the Alexandra bridge which is two lanes for vehicles and has a wide wooden sidewalk with two lanes for cyclists and a wide path for pedestrians. It is quite something to watch the parliament buildings get closer and closer. We went up Wellington street and were a bit choked up looking at the Terry Fox memorial, the eternal flame and the parliament buildings. We called Bernie and he gave us directions to their home in Nepean. Bernie and Edna were neighbours of the Mol's when Bruce was growing up in Transcona, Man. We stayed with them for 3 nights and they truly made us feel like family. Bruce enjoyed talking about the "old days" with them, meeting their family again, and hearing more about his parents and looking at old photos. They took us on a driving tour of Ottawa on Saturday evening and on Sunday and Monday we took the bus downtown and toured the Parliament Buildings, the Royal Mint, and the National Art Gallery. As well as Chapters, Starbucks, and Mountain Equipment Co-op! It was difficult to say goodbye on Tuesday morning.

Moving as slowly as we do, we have seen the terrain change and the changing smells. In Nova Scotia and New Brunswick there are wild roses growing everywhere and the scent is carried on the breeze. Now in the farmlands, the smells have changed to clover, corn, alfalfa, and yes, that dairy farm smell.

We took a south west route to Kingston, and arrived at Tante Gre's yesterday afternoon. Today we are going to look around town and are going to Matt and Sheila's (Bruce's cousins) for dinner.

Someone asked us about the food. The bakeries have definitely improved and we've had some good cinnamon buns, butter tarts, etc.. Food in restaurants has been hit and miss. In Québec City the food was expensive and mediocre. But we are eating well and no, we haven't lost any weight!!!

Tomorrow we are heading towards Markham, Barrie and Southampton.

That's about all for now! Bruce and Maureen Mol

Alberta

Wed 08/09/99 8:05 PM

It's just after labour day, and here we are in Calgary. We've had our first glimpses of the mountains and realise how close to being home we are. We had a good trip across the Prairies. The people are friendly and the scenery is beautiful. The sunrises are spectacular, the days were warm and nights were cool and the moon huge. It started to get cooler right on September 1st. A few days we were heading into strong winds, but mostly we've had cross winds, and yes the occasional tail wind. This is our itinerary for the rest of the trip:

Sep 8-10 Calgary – Jackie's

Sep 10-13 making our way to Banff

Sep 13-20 Banff to Kelowna with Terry and Linda (they'll have a motor home to carry gear and a warm place to sleep) Terry and Linda are taking our camping gear home and we are staying in motels or with friends/family the rest of the way.

Sep 20 Kelowna/Westbank – motel

Sep 21 Penticton – Jean and Dennis's

Sep 22 Princeton – motel

Sep 23 Manning Park Lodge

Sep 24 Hope – The Skagit

Sep 25 Mission – Mom's

Sep 26 Delta – Thomas and Sheila's

Sep 27 Victoria – Mile Zero Yahoo!!!!

We are going to stay with Maureen's Aunt in Victoria for a few days, then will head back to the lower mainland.

See you soon!!!!

Bruce and Maureen Mol

British Columbia

Thu 23/09/99 7:58 PM

Hi everyone,

We have updated the web site with mountain photos and the journal is updated to Sept. 20. We have had a super trip through the mountains. The weather has been excellent – warm sunny days for cycling and cool nights for sitting around the campfire. The mountain scenery is spectacular - we saw lots of elk in the Banff area and although the parks staff said bears had been active in the campgrounds, we didn't see any. We had a great week from Banff to Kelowna with Terry and Linda and a motor home. What a difference riding without all the gear on the bikes. Although I must say, the Rockies were no where near as difficult as I expected, a few hills on the 1A between Banff and Lake Louise, mostly downhill to Golden, then two long gradual climbs to Roger's Pass. The Okanagan was hot and the steepest hill, since the scenic route detour in New Brunswick, was the 2km climb to Jean and Dennis' – but worth it to see them again. Yesterday was a long day (120km) to Princeton, and I had a flat by Bromley Park. The shoulders in BC have the most glass and debris that we have seen anywhere – period! The climb to Sunday Summit today (all 34km) took a little over 3 hours but wasn't bad – just long and slow. It was perfect cycling weather – sunny, a few clouds and a breeze to keep it cool.

We'll be in Victoria in 4 days to send our last message.

See you Soon!!!!

Bruce and Maureen Mol

Tue 28/09/99 2:20 PM

We did it!!

Thanks everyone for all your help.

Bruce and Maureen Mol

Appendix 2 - Our Website Journal

Newfoundland

May 27/99 Vancouver to St. John's

We are finally en route from Vancouver to St. John's. Canada 3000 takes all our baggage, including 2 bikes in a 6 foot hard shell case with no extra charge. It's a long flight with two stops - Calgary and Halifax. It's a beautiful sunset upon arrival.

May 28/99 Airport Inn - St. John's

Bruce built up the bikes and we headed into town in the rain. It takes longer to build the bikes and we ask for two extensions on our check out time. Bruce has first flat in the lobby of the Airport Inn.

May 28-June 2/99 Compton House - St. John's

Staying at the Compton House B&B, we explore St. John's and area. Signal Hill, Cape Spear, a whale and puffin watch tour and the Ocean Sciences Centre. Terry and Denise take us on an evening driving tour and watch the sunset at Conception Bay and out for dinner.

June 2/99 Vinland Motel - St. Anthony

Boy oh boy is it windy here! We flew from St. John's to St. Anthony; the airstrip is out in the middle of nowhere, 50 km from the town site. It took us 5 hours to ride into town!!!! The winds never let up and we were happy to hit 20 kph pedalling down hill. We saw two moose and one caribou. We passed the only campsite 7 km out of town and receive snotty welcome. We bought a drink and a chocolate bar and decided we wouldn't return.

June 3-4/99 Viking Nest B&B - Hay Cove

We rode out to L'Anse aux Meadows today. It was raining, windy and COLD! Visit the Dark Tickle in St. Lunaire because sign says coffee shop. Actually, soon to open coffee shop. The owners see how cold we are and make us each a cup of tea, offer us jackets and talk to us when they can. We are staying at a lovely B&B in Hay Cove, 1 km from the Viking Settlement, which we visited today. Also got back into St. Anthony today with Thelma, the owner of the B&B and went to the Grenfell Museum. Grenfell was the doctor from England who brought medical service to Labrador and Northern Newfoundland in the early 1900's. Everyone we speak to seems to know us – oh, you're the cyclists we passed on the highway. St. Anthony is pronounced Sainantony. Icebergs are Hiceburgs.

June 5/99 Dockside Motel - St. Barbe

We got a lift to the St. Anthony airport and rode from there to St. Barbe. For about 30km, we are riding toward the coast and then the road takes a left and we ride with the Strait of Belle Isle on our right and can see Labrador in the distance. The wind off the strait is cold and in our faces. 70 km took us 9 hours. Met a cyclist from Calgary, heading north.

June 6/99 Tucker's Cottages

Still riding into headwinds, the water on our right is now the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Met another cyclist, this time from Edmonton, also heading north.

June 7/99 River of Ponds Campground

Rain and wind this morning, Mr. Tucker gives us a lift to Port Saunders. We had planned to camp at Hawke's Bay, but we're doing ok, so kept going.

June 8/99 Shallow Bay Campground

Tailwind - yippeee!!!! We get 80km to Cow Head - we're in Gros Morne National Parc - it's beautiful! Also saw the "Arches" - limestone rocks formed in arches. There was frost this morning on the tent.

June 9/99 Juniper Campground - Rocky Harbour

Riding through the park is great - there are lots of places to stop. Unfortunately, we don't have time or a place to leave the bikes to go off the main highway. Great pizza place in Rocky Harbour!

June 10/99 Frontier Cottages - Wiltondale

The road has been fairly flat but today the hills started. The longest was 5km and steep. The downhill was awesome - hit a high of 70kph. The sun was shining and the winds were calm.

June 11/99 Andreas Backyard - Pasadena

A great ride from Wiltondale to Deer Lake. There's only been convenience stores since St. Anthony, so we were happy to arrive in town and have a selection of fresh food. After lunch, we went on to Pasadena, once again into strong headwinds. Met some wonderful people there who let us camp in their back yard and made us Newfoundland Fish Cakes for dinner.

June 12/99 Best Western - Corner Brook

Bruce has second flat. Patched tube develops aneurysm at the patch. Tired today, we are staying in a motel and resting.

June 13/99 Barachois Provincial Park

A gas station attendant near Deer Lake said, oh it's all downhill from Corner Brook to Port aux Basques - 216 km, yeah right! Pedal up, then pedal down, then up, well you get the picture. The scenery is pretty much the same: trees, moose, and highway. The park is lovely but the black flies are out - dinner in the tent.

June 14/99 Heritage House - Port aux Basques

Ok, you ask, how did you get to P. A. B. in 2 days battling headwinds? We have to admit, after 100km, at the Hungry Bear Restaurant, the shuttle van was too inviting to pass up. There's a section of highway, about oh, 40km from P.A.B. that gets gusts of wind strong enough to take semi's off the road. We arrived early evening, found a B&B and got a reservation on the 8am ferry. Good bye Newfoundland.

Nova Scotia - Part 1

June 15/99 Dove B&B - North Sydney

Two words- Windy and Humid.

Change of route plans - the hovercraft between Cheticamp and Iles Des Magdalene is not operating until June 30, so we are planning a different route from Sydney to get to PEI and back to Halifax to meet Val and Alex.

June 16/99 Ben Eoin Campground

Leaving North Sydney, we miss the turn at a freeway exchange and take a 10km detour, we finally get on to route 4 along the Bras d'Or Lake.

June 17/99 Joyce's Campground - St. Peter's

About 4am we hear the rain start and Bruce races to get our clothing off the line. It's still raining when we get up, so it's on with the rain gear. We pass through Big Pond and stop at Rita's tea house for a cuppa and quiche. Really friendly people here. The road is windy, hilly and no shoulder. Tonight we chat with Donald from Syracuse while our clothes are drying.

June 18/99 Hyclass Campground - Linwood

Raining again, we put all our stuff in the dryers when we arrive at Linwood. There's a Tim Horton's (or two) everywhere and their soup and bagel makes a great lunch! We are now on the Trans Canada and the shoulders are good and the grades are gradual.

Prince Edward Island

June 19/99 Northumberland Provincial Park.

What if you were crossing the country and your wheel was rubbing your fender, so you bend the fender assuming that was the problem. Then the brakes start to rub; then you notice the wheel is warped; hey wait a second! ALL the spokes are loose!!!; then you clean the dirt accumulated from a few wet days and find the rim cracked at the top in two places and the side cracked in three. Then you wonder what went wrong with this Campagnolo product and nobody knows. And to top it off, you are at an info booth 100Km from PEI and 200 from Halifax. Maureen's rear rim develops cracks and we get a ride from Antigonish to the ferry, plan to camp there and hope to make it to Charlottetown, PEI. on Sunday. Betting we could get a wheel built in PEI we bought a ride to the ferry terminal and made our way to Northumberland Campground 4 Km from the terminal on the PEI side. Can you have a lucky day the day your wheel breaks down? Because of our sudden decision to get a ride to the PEI ferry, we didn't have time to catch up on a few necessities. We had \$18 between us, didn't have groceries and didn't know if we'd need our money for the campground fees. We began quizzing the info. centre employee. Is there a bank machine?-No; Is there a grocery store around here?-No; Is there a shuttle?-No. A father /daughter couple overheard us and offered a bunch of their food saying they had too much because they had been eating out. They gave us a Kraft dinner, two tins of ice tea, two tetra paks of juice, cream of wheat and hot chocolate. We rode slowly to the campground and met up with the Cycling PEI bike club. One of the club members had a wheel collapse and was getting a ride home the next day so Maureen got a ride with him.

June 20/99 Charlottetown

We are staying with Bryson and Joan until Wednesday. Parts for a new wheel had to be ordered from Ontario and the bike should be ready Friday. We are going to rent a

car to see the island and, on Sunday, we are taking yet another shuttle to Halifax to meet Val and Alex.

June 21-22/99 Charlottetown

We spent a couple days sightseeing around town, visiting Province House and out to Cavendish to see Anne of Green Gables home.

June 23-24/99 Jacques Cartier Provincial Park

What a beautiful place - red sandy beaches, warm Gulf of St. Lawrence waters, and a tenting spot right on the edge of it all. It was really hot and we used the tarp for shade. No need for the fly.

We took all the scenic routes - the countryside is beautiful! We visited the Acadian Museum in Miscouche and went right out to North Cape.

June 25/99 Cabot Provincial Park

More scenic biways - Cedar Dunes, West Point Lighthouse, and finally Cabot Prov. Pk This is where Emily of New Moon is filmed.

June 26/99 The MacDonald's - Charlottetown

Spent most of today in Summerside at the College of Piping and Celtic Arts Summer Highland Gathering. The massed bands of the opening ceremonies were very impressive. Imagine about 7 pipe bands, including the RCMP, Airforce, Dunedin Fla., and Canadian Millennium bands, all playing in unison - yes this was outdoors! There was Highland Dancing, Step Dancing and piping competitions too.

Nova Scotia - Part 2

June 27/99 Garden View B&B - Halifax

The hospitality of Bryson and Joan awed us again. We arrived back at their place late Saturday afternoon, and they informed us that the shuttle company would not take us to Halifax because of the liability with the bikes and that they, Joan and

Bryson, would take us and spend the afternoon in Halifax! So we packed up and left shortly before nine, less than an hour later we were in New Brunswick, via the Confederation Bridge and shortly after, in Nova Scotia - 3 provinces in a little over an hour! We arrived at the Garden View B&B and dropped the bikes and all our gear, then went and wandered the waterfront in the sweltering heat. After lunch, we went to Point Pleasant Park, and around to where Joan used to live. They dropped us back at the B&B and we said good-bye to our new friends, that we feel like we've known forever. Coincidentally, Joan and Maureen may be related through their Scottish ancestors!

June 28/99 Garden View B&B - Halifax

Today, we visited the Citadel, heard the noon gun and saw the Titanic film at the Maritime Museum.

June 29/99 Blue Rocks B&B - Blue Rocks

This morning we met Val and Alex (wonderful to see familiar faces!) and headed towards Peggy's Cove. It was a foggy damp day, as it usually is at Peggy's Cove. The fisherman's memorial, carved in stone, is very impressive and we warmed up with seafood chowder at the restaurant. Maureen seemed to be having bike trouble and it was difficult to find the source of the problem. At lunch, we discovered that the spokes of the new rear wheel had loosened but it was past the point of our combined repair skills. It looked like we would head back to Halifax and try to meet Val and Alex a couple days later. Then Alex pulls out the info on the B&B they have booked in Lunenburg and there's a bike shop. So we phoned Al and Merrill at Blue Rocks B&B and bike barn. Yes, he can fix our wheel, Yes, they have a room available and Yes, he could come get us! Such wonderful hospitality.

June 30-July 1 Blue Rocks B&B - Blue Rocks

Today Maureen's wheel was ready to go and we went for a short ride with Mick and Sharon who we met in the bike shop. At Mahone Bay, we parted company but met

Val and Alex. Merrill offered to let us set up tent in their backyard, as we couldn't afford to stay on at the B&B. On Canada Day we explored the Lunenburg Museum, and had lobster dinner. Mahone Bay and Lunenburg are two of the most beautiful places we've seen

July 2/99 Hunt's Point

Despite Al's bet that we wouldn't be out before 10, we left Blue Rocks at 920 and headed towards East LaHave. When we arrived the cable ferry was undergoing repairs, so we cycled the extra 27km around to the bridge at Bridgewater. It was very pretty along the water and we were all feeling pretty good. However by the time we pulled into Liverpool at 630pm, with 100km behind us, 25 to go, and out of water for about 30 minutes, we were pretty tired. The plan to buy groceries and cook dinner was quickly scrapped and we stopped at a pasta/pizza joint for dinner. We arrived at Hunt's Point about 830pm, showered and went to bed.

July 3/99 Upper Story Suite - Shelburne

We split up today as Val and Alex were taking a bit longer route and Maureen was feeling tired. We met up in Shelburne and shared a 2 bedroom flat. Had a wonderful dinner at Charlotte's Lane - the best seafood chowder to date.

July 4/99 Bayberry Campground - Barrington

The four of us rode together today, until we turned off for the campground. Val and Alex went on to Cape Sable Island in the fog. This campground we stayed at used sawdust for everything. Even the pit toilets - pee into the bucket, throw 2 cups of sawdust in and you're done!

July 5/99 Loomers Campground - Arcadia

We left early and headed to Tim Horton's for breakfast. About an hour after we left there, Val and Alex caught up to us and we rode together to Pubnico. They turned off to go see the Acadian Museum and we kept going, having seen the one on PEI. We were just settled into the campground outside Yarmouth and heading for the pool

when they pulled in. Bruce and Val exchanged books, we had a group hug and goodbyes until fall.

July 6/99 Darling Lake

We took an easy day today - slept in, rode to Yarmouth for lunch and camped here at Darling Lake. It was raining most of the day, but we managed to get set up and have dinner during a break and had just huddled in the tent for the night when the thunder and lightening started followed by heavy rain.

July 7/99 Digby

A tailwind pushed us all the way to Digby. This was a really pretty ride - little villages, bakeries, and once the fog lifted we could see the water on our left. The rail trail was right beside the campground, so we walked into town, Maureen had "world famous Digby scallops" for dinner. We sat outside on the patio and listened to some local entertainment.

New Brunswick

July 8/99 Rockwood Campground - Saint John

We're in New Brunswick - province # 4. The ferry from Digby to Saint John is 3 hours and is very expensive - \$25 per person and \$12 per bike. And the bikes just lean against the wall. However, there's a movie, gambling, pub and cafeteria. We arrived in Saint John at 430pm, went to the "Reversing Falls" info booth - we were at the wrong time to see the falls reversing, got information on a campground and routes out of town. Had excellent Mexican food for dinner.

July 9/99 Kiwanis Campground - Oak Point

Hmmmm.... what can I say about today. We were told to take the scenic route out of town involved two ferries (free), and a short ride through cottage country and there's at least 3 campgrounds along the 102 to Fredericton. We waited an hour for one ferry, rode 20km of very steep up and down (kinda of like Gabriola Island), and yes,

it was pretty, but not worth the hills. Tired, we stopped at the first campground we came to on the 102. Good thing we did - there aren't any more!

July 10/99 The Very Best B&B - Fredericton

No kidding - that's what it's called! We planned to get as far as Oromocto, about 20km south of Fredericton. We stopped at a gas station and while chatting to the folks there, they said oh no, don't stay in Oromocto, take the bridge over, get on the Trans Canada and stay at the Howard Johnson in Fredericton. The fellow phones - it's \$110 +tax - no thanks. So we get to Oromocto about 430pm - the motel is a dive and we finally found the tourist info only to find out the campground is 15 km off in another direction. So I started phoning around Fredericton for a hotel. Everything is booked or very expensive, then I stumbled across this B&B, almost right downtown, \$89 including tax and breakfast and it's available - hold that I say. A quick stop at Subway (we have been eating ALL day!) and we're off. We arrived at the very best and made ourselves at home. An unbelievable amount of really good food for breakfast, great conversation with the other guests and it was 1pm before we were off. We finally found out WHY the St. Anthony airport (Northern NF) is so far from nowhere (see June 2). One of the other guests hails from Red Bay, Labrador and told us, his father said two communities, St. Anthony and Flower's Cove were fighting over who got the airport, it couldn't be decided, so they plunked it half way between the communities...

July 11/99 Heritage Farm Campground - Mactaquac

We left the B&B, and crossed the Saint John River on the old rail bridge that has been converted to a pedestrian bridge. The trail is well maintained in this area and we stayed on it for a bit. Back on the 105 heading North, we camped just outside Mactaquac. However, being Sunday, grocery stores are closed and we unknowingly passed the last convenience store a number of hilly kilometres before the campground. The people kindly gave us the fixings for chicken burgers that Bruce cooked in the rain...

July 12/99 Covered Bridge Golf Course - Hartland

Have you ever camped on a golf course before? We arrived at Hartland, tired and hot to find out that the campground no longer exists but the golf course is building a new campground, so follow the road up the hill to the clubhouse. Ok, we get up there to find out the washroom buildings aren't finished. So we showered and had dinner at the clubhouse and about 8pm went to have a look at the campground. Well, it was down a long, steep loose gravel road. We went back and they let us camp in the trees next to the green. This morning, they wouldn't charge us for it.

July 13/99 Robert Baird Memorial Campground - Perth-Andover

We are making good time through NB so far, but apparently the hills start again tomorrow. We have met 6 other cycle tourists in the last two days. A fellow from NS who left Vancouver on May 17, a couple from Brandon Man. (the first other couple we've met), a couple from Montreal, and a fellow from Oshawa. The couple from Montreal are about 70 and are retracing the trip around Atlantic Canada, they took when their son was 2yrs old. They have no fancy gear and in fact he had a suitcase strapped to the back of his bike.

July 14/99 Camping Grande-Rivière - Saint Leonard

A really nice ride today on the 105 which ends at Grand Falls, then a short jaunt on the Trans Canada. We didn't sleep well at this campground - between the highway noise, the Irving mill, and the occasional train, we were awake most of the night. Bruce is getting a cold.

July 15/99 Les Jardins De La Republique Provincial Park

Nope, we're not in Québec yet, but this area of New Brunswick is very French. We rode the Trans Canada to Edmunston and then got on the rail trail. Walked around the botanical gardens - the rose garden is lovely - Iceberg White is my favourite.

Québec

July 16/99 Plage de Saint Modeste

Province #5 and we gained an hour back today. We followed the rail trail to Saint Modeste (15km south of Rivière Du Loup). The trail is excellent - very well signed, good surface and an easy 4% grade through the mountains. We saw lots of chipmunks, rabbits and some other "wildlife". The funniest thing was once we hit the down hill part, it's not steep enough to coast, so we are pedalling easily and going about 25kph. All of a sudden Maureen slammed on the brakes - a skunk appeared on the trail - Yikes! We followed very cautiously until he went off the other side. Moments later Maureen ran over a snake (most of you know my aversion to these reptiles). I had goose bumps for half an hour!

July 17/99 Camper's World

Headwinds out of Rivière du Loup were reminiscent of Newfoundland. However once the thunder shower passed, the wind calmed down a bit. 100km and we got the last campsite. This campground is something else. Coffee and Toast at 9pm, regular announcements on the loudspeaker, kids everywhere. We met a couple from Victoria who are now living in Ottawa and chatted with them quite a while. They had Starbucks coffee...

July 18/99 The Clarendon Hotel - Québec City

Québec City!!!! It is so exciting to be here. We took the ferry from Lèvis across to Vieux Ville and climbed the BIG hill to the hotel. There are more people here than we've seen for six weeks!

July 19/99 Clarendon Hotel - Québec City

Today we walked around the old part of the town, took the guided tour of the Citadel, walked the oldest street in North America, and basically took in the

atmosphere of the city. We are doing well with our high school French. The food is mediocre, but the pastries are great.

July 20/99 Champlain

We followed Hwy. 138 south from Québec City towards Trois-Rivières. It is very flat and mostly farmland - le mais de deux couleurs - or as we know it peaches and cream corn on the cob. The corn is about a month earlier than in BC and lot of road side stands selling it. Not the most enjoyable camping spot - no buffer from the highway noise.

July 21/99 Le Vieux Moulin - St Barthlemy

We continued on Hwy 138 into headwinds. It is really hot and even with sunscreen we are getting burned. Probably the quietest campground in Québec!

July 22/99 Laurentides

Another hot windy day. Most expensive camping to date - \$24!!! We are getting tired of the campgrounds in Québec. The washrooms leave a lot to be desired in the cleanliness dept. and most don't even have toilet paper dispensers - good thing we packed our own tp! Tonight we experienced the wildest thunderstorm. We were in the processing of moving camp to get away from loud stereos and the clouds came rolling in thick and fast. Pretty soon it was hailing and we were racing to get everything covered. The thunder was right overhead and about 2 second delays between the thunder and lightening. Mother Nature sounded pretty angry that night! The rain came down in buckets and we had a gushy amount of water under the tent. The rain finally stopped and the stars were visible and the ground soaked up all the rain. Happily, we had only one damp spot in the tent!

July 23/99 Marina and Campground - Montebello

Whew - the sun's out today and very little sign of last nights storm. We covered 116km today to Montebello, which is a neat little town. The riding was not pleasant - hwy 148 has no shoulders and truck traffic combined with Friday afternoon get out

of town traffic made for some pretty stressful riding. Plenty of stupid motorist tricks, mostly involving speed and impatience. Glad to be off the road. Camped at the marina tonight and while the site isn't the greatest, the washrooms and showers are clean. Called the Edna in Ottawa, we'll be there tomorrow.

Ontario

July 24/99 Edna and Bernie - Nepean

Wow - here we are in the Nation's Capital!! It's quite a sight coming over the bridge from Hull, looking at Parliament Hill. We rode along the canal and out to Nepean to Edna and Bernie, where we were welcomed like family.

July 25-26/99 Edna and Bernie - Nepean

We stayed for 3 nights with Bernie and Edna and still couldn't possibly see all the Ottawa has to offer. They took us on a drive around town Saturday evening, and we took the bus into town both Sunday and Monday. We toured the Royal Mint where they make investment and speciality coins, Parliament bldg. Centre block, and the National Art Gallery. Bruce enjoyed reminiscing about Transcona with them and their family. We were both misty eyed when we left on Tuesday morning.

July 27/99 Moonlight Bay - Otter Lake

Made it halfway to Kingston today. The campground is nice, on the lake and the people are friendly. More farmland riding, cornfields, clover, and dairy farms.

July 28/99 Tante Gre's - Kingston

We followed hwy 15 until Codes Corner where we turned off onto Old Kingston Mill Road. Stopped at the Kingston Locks on the Rideau Canal. Arrived at Tante Gre's about 4pm. Wonderful to see her again! Talked about her family immigrating to Canada and later when Bruce's parents came over. Interesting learning more about the Mol family.

July 29/99 Tante Gre's - Kingston

We borrowed Tante Gre's car and drove into downtown Kingston and walked around the town. Tonight we all drove out to Howe Island to Matt and Sheila's for dinner. Such a beautiful spot.

July 30/99 Carrying Place

We got up early, intending to ride only until the Friday afternoon long weekend traffic got bad, but in actuality, that never materialised. We followed Bath road, hwy 33 along the water. This is one of the prettiest rides. Several quaint little villages and lovely homes. The campground has a pool and we jumped right in. This is the hottest summer on record.

July 31/99 Viv and Seb's - Markham

Yesterday we out rode a thunderstorm, but today we were in it. It's still hot (29C) but the rain is really coming down. The heat and the rain combined with a poor night's sleep and I was wiped. We decided to take a motel in Bowmanville, but everything is sold out between there and Oshawa so we called Viv and she came to pick us up in Oshawa.

Aug 01-02/99 Viv and Seb's - Markham

We met Viv and Seb while they were on vacation in Newfoundland and they offered us a bed when passing through Markham and here we are. We are taking it easy visiting, reading, and lying on the hammock. Bruce is coming down with a cold and not feeling very well.

Aug 03-09/99 Fred and Mary - Barrie

Did Doug's parents know what they were getting into when they offered us a bed for the night? We've both been sick with colds and flu and are trying all the remedies in the book to get rid of them. We hope to be back on the road by Monday. We have been well taken care of the last week!

Aug 10/99 Best Western - Collingwood

We are finally back on the road again. Both still coughing and not 100%, we covered 65km to Collingwood in the rain so decided on a hotel for tonight. We followed some nice quiet roads as suggested by Doug's parents.

Aug 11/99 Crystal Motel - Owen Sound

We were pretty tired and moving slowly, so when we arrived at Owen Sound we decided to take a motel again!

Aug 12/99 Barb and Graham - Southampton

A short ride today to Joan's parents in Southampton. It's a lovely spot here and we spent the afternoon visiting and went for a walk along the beach of Lake Huron.

Aug 13/99 Tobermory Village Campground - Tobermory

We're at the Northern tip of the Bruce Peninsula, camping indoors tonight. It's grey, wet and windy up here - glad we're inside!!! We met two cyclists today who rode Hwy 17, well they rode part way and after being forced off the road, including a fall, using their first aid kit on another cyclist who was forced off the road, they hitched a ride. They were the 4th people we've met who have said DON'T RIDE IT. We have decided to Go Greyhound from Espanola to make up some lost time.

Aug 14/99 Batman Campground

After a 2 hour ferry ride, we arrived on Manitoulin Island. We rode about 50km to the campground. This is probably the nicest private campground we have stayed in. Large grassy sites and lots of trees and clean washrooms.

Aug 15/99 Queensway Motel - Espanola

It was a flat ride from Sheguiandah to Whitefish and then the hills started. I watched the same mountain get closer and closer all morning, knowing we would have to go up, around or something! It wasn't all that bad - only a couple of long granny gear

climbs. We got in about 1pm and found the bus depot, lunch and a motel. Tomorrow, we're on the bus....

Aug 16/99 Greyhound bus # 2514

Once again, information given over the phone didn't match what actually happens. a) Espanola doesn't have bike boxes b) bikes will be bumped for passenger luggage, even if you pay the assured cargo fee. Luck seems to have been smiling on us again... the driver cleared one full cargo space and let us put the bikes in, cushioned by our luggage - only until Sault Ste. Marie, and it's NOT HIS FAULT if they're scratched and he won't charge us until Soo. At the Soo, they don't have boxes either, ok, the driver lets us go to Thunder Bay. At Thunder Bay, we're onto a third driver, at 11pm. The bikes can stay as is, because there's no freight to pick up before Winnipeg. Phew!! What a long journey - 24 hours, even with regular breaks it's a long time on a bus. We slept a bit. The scenery is mostly trees and Canadian Shield rock, but once in a while the highway winds along Lake Superior. Schreiber to Rossport and onto Nipigon was really pretty. It had been raining, then the sun came out and there was a huge rainbow. I'm glad we took the bus as there was a lot of truck traffic and the shoulders were inconsistent and overall the pavement is in poor condition (there are a couple of sections of relatively new pavement) and there's several sections of road work. We saw several cyclists heading east and they looked bagged!!

Manitoba

Aug 17/99 Canada Inn - Transcona

We arrived in Winnipeg at 7.15am and put all the stuff back together and had a look around downtown, The Forks, Portage and Main. Bruce visited the Compaq office and met face to face with the people he conversed with when he worked for DEC. We then headed to Transcona. This afternoon we rode around through Bruce's old neighbourhood and looked at the house he lived in for his first 14 years and the

school and church he attended. The streets have changed a bit, and the school is no longer a school, but a parish centre.

Aug 18/99 St. Claude Motel - St. Claude

We left Transcona this morning and rode to St. Vital, about 15km and spent far too much time in the Chapters, drinking coffee! A bit of grocery shopping at Safeway (first one!) and we were on our way. We are taking Hwy. 2 West. The winds were with us today, but there's no campgrounds in sight - 114km and we're in a motel after cooking dinner in the park. Nothing but wide open spaces. The flax fields are really pretty - fields of blue flowers.

Aug 19/99 Spruce Woods Provincial Park

We don't normally go more than 5km off the highway, but it was either 12km to the park or 25km to the next town. The park has a Laundromat, which clinched the decision.

Aug 20/99 Victoria Park- Souris

Our last night in Manitoba. We shared our campsite with a cyclist from Boston area.

Saskatchewan

Aug 21/99 Redvers Municipal Park - Redvers

Province # 8!!! We slept poorly last night and started off tired, but the first two hours we had no wind, and a slight down hill slope to the road, and the first 50 went quickly. The last 50 were a little slower. It was hot this afternoon and we were nearly out of water when we arrived. This is the friendliest town - everyone stopped to talk and the tourist info staff are most helpful. We camped in the cook shelter as a thunder, lightening, hail storm blew over us.

Aug 22/99 Chaparral Inn - Arcola

Well, the wind whipped up pretty good this afternoon. We were wiped when we got here and seeing black clouds, expected the same sort of weather as the previous evening. The campground had no shelter, so we opted for a motel room. Chaparral Inn - best room so far - fridge, coffee maker, microwave - \$45. watched Desperately Seeking Susan.

Aug 23/99 Riverside Park - Weyburn

Winds were from the north west, so not directly in our faces, stopped for second breakfast at Stoughton and arrived in Weyburn at 4pm. Stopped into the bagel place on the way out in the morning and ended up there for two hours chatting with a couple from Burlington, Ont.

Aug 24/99 Ogema Regional Park - Ogema

Almost all the small towns have municipal or regional parks with camping. It's excellent - they are clean, cheap and usually have showers and sometimes laundry, and shower companions - salamanders! Sask. doesn't go on Daylight Savings time - which is great for us - it's dark by 830pm and dawn about 6am

Aug 25-26/99 Assiniboia Regional Park - Assiniboia

84km (8.5hrs) today directly into the wind, hot, hilly and the roughest road we have been on. Add to the fact, there are no services between Ogema and Assiniboia made for a very long day for us. We rested in the shade of 3 bales of hay and other than that, there is no shade or places to stop. But the town is super friendly. We decided to take a rest day here and spent Thursday doing laundry, getting photos developed, and went for a swim. Naturally, on our rest day, we noticed the wind was coming from ... the east....

Aug 27/99 Parkside Inn - Ponteix

Our best time yet - 120km in 5.5 hours - yes it was a tail wind!! Been through a couple of very quiet little towns - Lafleche, Kincaid, Aneroid ...Visited the museum here - they have a large collection of Indian arrowheads and a plesiosaurus skeleton was found in the area several years ago.

Aug 28/99 Gull Lake Campground - Gull Lake

An abrupt change of plans at the highway junction - south to Shaunavon and onto Eastend (to see a T-Rex and fossil research station) and Cypress Hills or north to Gull Lake and onto Maple Creek. The clouds in the south and the SE wind were the determining factor - we headed north to Gull Lake. (there isn't a lake) Excellent bakery - awesome cinnamon buns with cream cheese frosting!!! Dinner and a chat with a couple from Duncan BC, then bed. Woke at 5am to rain so raced to put the fly on. There was a mottled colour kitten in the campground who made itself right at home with us. Later in the evening there were at least 5 young cats running around. Our little mottled friend disappeared at dark but came running back to say goodbye this morning. Now I really miss our kitties!

PS: the prairies are NOT FLAT! Wide open spaces yes, but not flat!

Aug 29/99 Memories B&B - Maple Creek

Our last night in Sask. and splurged on a B&B. This home was built in the early 1900's. Winds were from the SE today. We were on Hwy1 - good shoulders, more traffic than we've seen in days but not bad and the trucks give us lots of room.

Alberta

Aug 30-31/99 Municipal Campground - Walsh

Here we are in Alberta! We arrived shortly before noon and had lunch. Maureen was very sleepy and it was very hot 36C and our morning tailwind changed directions, becoming a very strong headwind. We decided to park it for the day.

Spent the afternoon in the air-conditioned tourist info centre - Maureen slept, Bruce slept/read. After dinner the wind was still pretty strong, and it looked like a storm was coming. We did get a bit of rain through the night, and at 7am the wind was howling, and the rain was coming down. We went back to sleep. Walsh isn't a very big place - population 65, 2 gas stations, 1 restaurant. The campground is pretty bare and close to the highway, but the washrooms and showers are spotless. We spent a lazy day in the tent reading and drinking coffee. The next day the wind had calmed down and the skies were clear. The temperature however, dropped. It's fall!!!

Sept 01/99 Gas City Campground - Medicine Hat

An easy 55km to Medicine Hat today, we arrived just before lunch and went to the first Tim Horton's since Winnipeg. Then spent the afternoon at the mall, looking around, mailing parcels, stocking up on a few items. While in Safeway, we noticed an Earl's across the street. So we hung around until dinner time and PIGGED OUT - the best meal in weeks!!! After dinner, we found the bike path and got into the campground. This is an excellent campground - nice warm washrooms and cook shelter. However, helicopters seemed to fly over all night!

Sept 02/99 Grassy Lake Centennial Campground - Grassy Lake

There's no lake here!! 85km from Medicine Hat on Hwy 3. We were going to stop at Bow Island, (we didn't see an island) but the wind was with us so we kept going. It's cooler and we have all our layers on today. The highway has nice wide shoulders and traffic is good. We set up the tent in the cook shelter as it looked like it might rain in the night. We're impressed with Alberta's campgrounds - again the washrooms and showers are clean and warm.

Sept 03/99 Henderson Lake Park - Lethbridge

Lethbridge is not a cycle friendly city. I turned off Hwy 3 onto Mayor Magrath Dr. following the signs to the info booth, and totally missed the No Cycling signs for several km. Finally realised I should be on the little access road that winds it's way

along side the main road, but has many entrances to businesses, side streets (read: many intersections and dangerous ones for cyclists), there's no entrance to the info booth from this side road, so a bit of manoeuvring over the sidewalk and confusing traffic to get into it. So, I ask at the info booth, what other streets are cyclists not allowed on? The answer: Scenic Dr (!!!), Mayor Magrath and avoid 3rd Ave, the main street to downtown. Ok, so how do I get out of here and to the campground. The answer: Lift your bike over the chain fence (sure, with 50lb of gear on my bike no problem!) and go back on the side road to Park Drive, then get on the bike path!!!

The map they give out does not have the designated cycle routes on it, in fact, the map shows 7th ave. which is a cycle route, ending at 13th street. When you arrive at this intersection, 7th continues.. to where.. I don't know.. Camping is expensive, laundry more expensive. We added to the local economy as little as possible.

Sep 04/99 Kozy Motel - Fort Macleod

What a day! We slept in, left Lethbridge late, found a bike route by accident, but since it's not on the map, turned off, couldn't get on the highway, finally found a highway entrance, I'm going downhill, easily 50kph and BANG. I don't know what I hit, but it sliced the tube and the tire. Damn!! We put on one of our spare tires and will have to buy a new one in Calgary. Because we left so late, and it's warmer today, the wind is in our faces, oh, well, only 50km to Ft. McLeod. We stopped at Coalhurst, cross the train tracks to the gas station, buy water and Powerade about to get on the bikes and ding, ding, ding... there's a long slow coal train. Today we could see the mountains in the distance and we got that 'almost home' feeling. We finally got Ft.M and this really is a cozy room. Reminded us of the Skagit in Hope.

Sep 05/99 Municipal Campground - Granum

We left later than usual, planning only to ride to Head Smashed In Buffalo Jump, about 17km, and the grocery store in Ft. McLeod didn't open until 11am. By this time the wind was whipping up from the west., it was pretty slow going and about 5km off Hwy 2, we decided to turn back and head for Granum. We arrived there and

the campground was full (long weekend) but they felt sorry for us and let us camp in the cook shelter - no charge. Granum is a community of about 300 and a group of women run the campground for the village. The washrooms are very clean, there is a man made lake with a little beach and stocked for fishing, trail around the lake and a really great little cook shelter. The wind kept howling 'til about 3am and at 5am the sky was clear and there were lots of stars.

Sep 06/99 Municipal Campground - Nanton

Another great municipal campground - clean washrooms, a cook shelter and lots of trees. The best thing about Nanton - the cappuccino bar in Emporium Antiques. Run by two women, we sat and chatted with them while it poured rain outside and after an hour, when we left, they said the latte's on the house. And it was the best coffee and latte's we've had for weeks. Nanton has lots of antiques stores but pay a visit to Emporium and tell them we sent you!!

Sep 07/99 Super 8 Motel - Calgary

Well, we were refused at a campground for the first time - no, they weren't full but they don't allow tents... It had been a long day into the wind and we weren't impressed. We continued on and stopped at the first motel. I asked at the front desk what the rate is - \$108, hmm that's kinda pricey. Well, ok \$100. So I tell her our story and she says ok \$90. Well, by the time we finish checking in and I give her the credit card, the rate is down to \$80. We're happy and I head right for the hot tub.

Sep 8-9/99 Jackie's

Two highlights today - we took our loaded bikes on the LRT in Calgary - only allowed during off peak hours, but at least it's a step in the right direction. Second highlight was seeing Jackie again after 19 years and meeting her family. Jackie stayed with Maureen's family for a month in Gr. 11 on an exchange student program. We spent two short days with them.

Sep 10/99 Municipal Park - Cochrane

We didn't get very far today - it was cold and there were lots of clouds swirling around that looked like rain. We lunched at the Pie Shoppe (!!!) and went to the campground and once again set up in the cook shelter.

Sep 11/99 Bow Valley Provincial Park

The clouds cleared today and we had a clear view of the mountains. It was a beautiful ride to this campground, which is really nice. Definitely a place to come back too. (and bring mountain bikes!)

Sep 12-13/99 Tunnel Mountain - Banff

This is the coldest morning since NF. But Wow - what a ride!! Mountains in every direction. We spent Monday in Banff and Terry Linda arrived about dinner time - teary eyed happy to see them!

Sep 14-15/99 Lake Louise Campground

Another spectacular ride. Linda, Bruce and I rode our bikes while Terry drove the motor home. Hwy 1A is beautiful for cycling. We took a day off and went up to Lake Louise and walked the trails both around the lake and along the Bow River. We have all the creature comforts in this home on wheels - indoor plumbing, hot showers and a warm place to sleep.

British Columbia

Sep 16/99 Whispering Spruce - Golden

Today was again spectacular! We crossed into BC about 11am. Hwy 1A from Lake Louise to the Great Divide is closed to vehicle traffic and the 3 of us were the only cyclists travelling it. From there, we got back on Hwy 1 and continued into Golden. A few uphill but mostly a downhill kind of day.

Sep 17/99 Glacier National Park

We reached the summit of Roger's Pass at 3pm today. The climbs were long but not steep, the sun was shining and it was a great ride. Traffic was delayed due to blasting in the Heather Hill area, and we were able to get through the tunnels when there was no traffic behind us. To top it off, the campground in the national park was beautiful. The only noise was the rushing of the river.

Sep 18/99 Yard Creek Provincial Park

Maureen woke up feeling a bit ill, and decided to spend the day as co-pilot of the motor home. Linda and Bruce left for the downhill to Revelstoke. (Yes, I missed out on the downhill). We stopped at Giant Cedars Boardwalk - we have a framed print taken in this area and wanted to see it for real. Lunch and groceries in Revelstoke and we continued on to the campground.

Sep 19/99 Ellison Provincial Park

Another beautiful day - the weather has been perfect - warm days, cool nights. We left shortly after nine and it was a great ride to Enderby where we met Terry. Maureen hopped in the motor home from there - knees aching. Bruce and Linda continued on and Linda did her first metric century day!!!!

Sep 20/99 The Dilworth - Kelowna

We said good byes to Terry and Linda this afternoon. It was a fun week. For us, we were happy to see familiar faces, ride light, sleep inside and cook meals with more than 1 pot! Bruce and Terry went for walks in the cool crisp mornings (before Linda and I got up), and Linda got to ride lots, including a 100+km day.

Sep 21/99 Jean and Dennis' - Penticton

Thanks for the cake!!! Jean made a lovely dinner and dessert was a "Congratulations" cake. Spent the evening looking at each other's photos and a visit to Dennis' new office.

Sep 22/99 Ponderosa Motel - Princeton

It was a hot Okanagan kind of day. We took Green Mountain Rd. which climbs for 25km then down for 10km back to Hwy 3 and into Keremeos. The service at lunch was SLOW and we were stopped longer than planned. I had a flat by Bromley Park and it was 6pm when we arrived at Princeton. Excellent dinner in the Greek restaurant and spent the evening in the hot tub.

Sep 23/99 Manning Park Lodge

It's a bit cooler today - good for 34km of climbing we have to do. 3.5 hours to Sunday Summit and another hour to Manning Park Lodge. The restaurant is excellent and we had a wonderful dinner.

Sep 24/99 Skagit Motel ("The Quiet Place") - Hope

It rained during the night and there's a dusting of fresh snow on the mountain behind the lodge. Going east to west, Alison Pass is a bit anti climatic after all the climbing yesterday. A relatively easy 10km to the summit, turning around to look east, the mountain we can see has quite a lot of snow. 17km of cold downhill with a bit of rain, then some up and down and flat to Hope Slide and downhill the rest of the way to Hope. It was raining a bit more after Sumallo Grove - enough to put rain gear on, but we're not soaked - just cold. The wind keeps our speed down - my max. is 66kph but generally, I am descending at below 55pkh. A soak in the hot tub warms us up.

Sep 25/99 Mom's - Mission

Sleeping in our own bed tonight! There was quite the wind storm Friday night and continued gusty winds this morning, so it was a bit of a slow go to Agassiz, then Mt Woodside. From there it was a quick rolling ride to Deroche and into the wind again the rest of the way to Mom's. Happy to be here is an understatement!

Sep 26/99 Thomas and Sheila's - Delta

What a great day! Doug, Val, Alex, Danelle, Bob and Rob rode out from Ft. Langley to meet us and we rode back to Ft. Langley where we had brunch at the Bedford House. We continued on and Sheila, Thomas, and Isaac met us on 96th and rode us back to their place. Joan and George came later for dinner. It's so great to see everyone again!

Sep 27/99 Mile Zero - Victoria

Yippee - 4 months since we flew out, 10 provinces, 6208km and here we are. Guess what - we had a tailwind on our last day!!!! Maureen's cousins came to Mile Zero, we took photos, picnicked in the park and rode back to Maureen's aunts.

We Did It!!!!!!

Appendix 3 - Equipment List

Bike case: For this trip we were concerned our bikes might get damaged and our trip put on hold or cancelled. To ease our minds, we borrowed a bike case. Bike cases may be rented or purchased from bike shops. Check the want ads, of bicycling magazines, if your local shop doesn't carry them. We were a little less concerned about our bikes flying to St. Anthony because, we figured, a small carrier was more dependent on excellent service than the large airlines.

Bike Stuff

Bikes:

1999 Marinoni Turismo w/ Campagnolo Athena (B) 30-39-52/ 12-26, 9 cog

Custom 1997 Marinoni Turismo w/ Campy Mirage (M) 26-39-52/ 13-28, 8 cog

Cateye Micro Cycle computer (M); Polar heart rate monitor (M)

Panniers by: Ortleib; MEC; Kirkland; Axiom and Outdoor Gear.

Camping Stuff Camp stoves and accessories: MSR Dragonfly stove, bowl plates, two plastic thermal mugs, two pots with fry pan lids, a kettle, coffee cone filter holder and an assortment of plastic eating and cooking utensils.

Note: In Canada there are regulations regarding the air transport of used camp stoves. Essentially, if the stove has ever been used, it cannot go in the air. Your options are to buy a new one and leave all the tags on it, ship your used one ground as hazardous material, buy a camp stove upon arrival, or travel without one.

Travelling without a stove, and therefore without all that cooking stuff, is a viable option. The people we've met who travel without cooking gear find a restaurant at lunch, for a hot meal, and stick to cold food for the rest of the day. Clothing We brought three sets of cycling clothing, two sets light weight casual clothing and warmer clothing for Newfoundland in June. We shipped the warm stuff and extra light stuff home. We had tights and jackets sent to meet us in Calgary. We had packed too much clothing to start. Camelbaks (water backpack) Tent/sleeping bag/mattress The Eureka Haida Loft is light, roomy and has two doors and large vestibules. The MEC Nighthawk sleeping bags are warm; synthetic-fill mummy bags and the Thermarests are very comfortable sleeping pads.

Computer Stuff

Panasonic CF-45 laptop computer 266MMX, WIN95, Office 97, FrontPage 98. With the exception of the bicycles, nothing cost us more money or time in consideration than the computer.

We wanted it rugged, because of vibration on the bike; small and light, because I'd have to carry it in my pannier instead of clothing; a keyboard, not a stylus because we hoped to write a lot; compatibility, because we were using web creation software; usability, because we were only going to be gone four months and we didn't want an expensive useless piece of equipment afterwards; adaptable, because we wanted to be able to show our digital images on the screen or, afterwards, through a projector.

Camera Stuff and Miscellaneous other things

Canon Powershot A5 and a Compact Flash/PCMCIA adapter. We wanted a camera small enough to keep in a jersey pocket. We wanted long-lasting battery, NiMH, and to save battery power, we wanted a memory card we could slip into the computer PCMCIA slot instead of downloading images through a cable.

We also brought a 35mm Pentax WR90 waterproof camera, a small tripod and a small pair of binoculars.

SONY Walkman AM/FM stereo cassette recorder.

Stuff sent home

Tourist info, souvenirs, T-shirts, tights, tarp, binoculars, books, small cook pot, a bowl plate, developed photographs, audio tapes, and camera accessories.

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