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Randonneur

Marathon Cycling

Editorial

Susan Allen

Summer has arrived! For many the weeks of training are paying off as we ride 600's and aim towards 1000's and the Rocky Mountain. As I write this Rando's are climbing Seymour Mountain as part of the Triple Mountain Challenge or heading up the Yellowhead highway as part of the Interior 600. For others the season is just beginning as they gear up to start the second series in July.

Doug and I have had some tough rides this spring as Doug came back from a three week business trip with less training than usual. Randonneur riding is 90% mental and I'd like to thank the ride volunteers and fellow riders on the Lower Mainland 300 k, the 400 k pre-ride and the Island 600 k for keeping our spirits up.

BC Randonneurs Electronic Mailing List

Mike Poplawski

The BC Randonneurs have a new electronic mailing list: bc-randonneurs@yahoogroups.com. To join, send an e-mail message to bc-randonneurs-subscribe@yahoogroups.com or visit <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/bc-randonneurs/join>. All discussions about the club and of interest to club members are welcome!

Educating Fergus

Eric Fergusson

A lone figure in simple Grecian robes stands deep in thought on the steps of the Parthenon - the Temple to Athena. A second figure, the student Fergus Doltus, ascends the Acropolis dressed in a strange stretchy black material, wearing a hard hat with a high intensity light bound to its front, and a curious bag strapped to his back filled with an improbably orange liquid. Fergus Doltus approaches his logic master, the great Socrates...

Fergus Doltus: Master Socrates, have you heard of this remarkable adventure-sporting event called Paris Brest Paris (PBP)?

Socrates: No Fergus, tell me about it.

Fergus Doltus: Well, it' s a bike ride. 3500 participants from many places around the world converge on a Parisian suburb and then ride day and night through the picturesque French countryside out to the city of Brest in western France, and then back to Paris. The ride is 1200 km long and takes great effort and courage.

Socrates: These participants must be in very good shape Fergus. It sounds like a most strenuous activity. I suppose they must start the event well prepared - their bikes must be in perfect condition, they must be well fed and hydrated, and of course well rested.

Fergus Doltus: Well...yes, yes and no Master Socrates. It is true that their bikes are shiny and in perfect condition, and they do begin with full bellies, as well as full water bottles...but the timing of the starts - for there are three start times - means that everyone begins the ride very short on sleep.

Socrates: This is a most curious situation Fergus. Explain more fully.

Fergus Doltus: Two of the three start times, Master, are in the evening just before people would normally be going to bed, and the third is very early the following morning. For this third start, riders do at least get a few hours of sleep before showing up for the check in, in the middle of the night. It' s better than no sleep at all though Master Socrates.

Socrates: At first glance, this plan seems puzzling. Perhaps with logic, this is a puzzle we can solve. Tell me, Fergus, why have the organizers chosen to start an endurance sporting event, which depends on the participants being well rested, at three times which guarantee that all the participants will be sleep deprived as the

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event starts?

Fergus Doltus: Well it occurs to me Master Socrates that the key for the peculiar start times might be in the varying time limits within which the riders of the three start times must compete their endeavor. You see, the 8 p.m. group must finish within 80 hours, the 10 p.m. group must finish within 90 hours, and the 5 a.m. group must finish within 84 hours. So perhaps the different start times are really meant to control the riders' finishing circumstances. Maybe the plan is to have riders finish in the daytime.

Socrates: Ok Fergus, let's test your theory. The start times would result in finishing limits at 4 a.m., 4 p.m., and 5 p.m. respectively. I see here in the 1999 results parchments that indeed the bulk of the 90-hour group finishes close to their time limit. For the other two starts however this is not so - the riders are spread out quite evenly, and many would have finished at night. We can therefore imagine that perhaps one start time could be designed to facilitate a daylight finish for this 90-hour group, where the riders appear to be more synchronous with their time limit, but how, Fergus, do we account for the other two start times?

Fergus Doltus: There is another factor to consider Master Socrates. For the riders at the fast end of the 80-hour group, Paris Brest Paris is a race - though many like to pretend that it is not so - and for these very fast riders the event takes only about 44 hours. This means that these riders too would be finishing in the late afternoon at 4 p.m. after a day of daylight speediness. Additionally, a 4 p.m. finish is spectator friendly - no one has to get out of bed at odd hours, including let's say reporters. And, if the press just happened to be hanging around at this most congenial time, then the winners might just find their way into the evening news, thus improving media exposure for the event.

Socrates: Your reasoning is impressive, Fergus, but we must remember that only a small number of riders are in this racing group. Surely a way could be found to not sacrifice the sleep of

British Columbia Randonneur Marathon Cycling is the hardcopy newsletter of the BC Randonneurs Cycling Club. The BC Randonneurs are a founding member of the Randonneurs Mondiaux (1983). The club is affiliated with Cycling BC and the Canadian Cycling Association.

The opinions expressed in the newsletter are those of the article authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the editor, club executive, Cycling BC, the CCA, or Randonneurs Mondiaux.

The newsletter is published in hardcopy form approximately every six weeks. Articles and notices are posted to the club webletter at www.randonneurs.bc.ca as received (or a little later if work or riding get in the way) and subsequently edited and formatted into this newsletter. If you are happy with the html or pdf version on the web and do not wish to receive further paper newsletters please send me an email at stoker@telus.net. I email the data reports as pdf.

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Submissions: Please send articles to me. My preference is plain text files or Word and digital photos in JPEG format to stoker@telus.net. Or mail (preferable a diskette) to Susan Allen, 2356 W 6th Ave, Vancouver, BC V6K 1V9

Next publication deadline is July 15, 2002.

the remaining 98 % of the 80-hour group and still achieve a marketable media moment. Consider this also...just think how much more quickly these racers might ride if they didn't start in a sleep deprived state. And of course none of this helps us to understand the 5 am start time.

Fergus Doltus: Well another thought does occur to me Master Socrates - the answer may be in the nature of the participants. This event demands that the participants suffer discomfort, and frequently experience pain. Should not the organizers design start times that increase the difficulty - the pain and discomfort - of the endeavor so that a successful completion might be judged even more meritorious?

Socrates: This is a possibility, Fergus, but then why would the organizers not also insist that the participants be deprived of food for a long period before the start, and could the organizers not also handicap the bikes themselves by adding weights or other impediments? If inhibiting the riders is the organizers' purpose, it seems illogical that these organizers would neglect other similar means of achieving their purpose.

Fergus Doltus: Then perhaps the illogical nature of the activity is the key - the illogical starting times are symbolic of the illogical nature of this type of cycling - for what logical person would wish to put themselves through an event like PBP?

Socrates: This explanation still seems tenuous, Fergus, but is no less implausible than the other possibilities we have explored. It seems we must concede that the choice of starting times at Paris Brest Paris will remain a mystery. Now make haste Fergus or you will be late for your physics class with Professor Archimedes who doth await you in the bath chamber.

Fergus Doltus: But wait Master Socrates, there is one further matter for which I seek your wisdom, and it's a surprise most glorious. You see, I have decided to organize my own ultra-marathon cycling event starting right here in Athens...I'm thinking of calling it Athens - Sarajevo - Sienna - ASS for short.

Socrates: Your initiative does you credit. But tell me, Fergus, have you considered the thorny question of starting times?

Fergus Doltus: Of course Master Socrates...I have decided to have a start late at night, and a second start very very early the next morning so that prospective participants might see that my event is like Paris Brest Paris.

Socrates: So are you telling me, Fergus, that even though you are free to start your ride at any time of the day or night, you have chosen to send your riders off at times designed to maximize their sleep deprivation, thereby repeating the mistake of the Paris Brest Paris start times that we have made such an effort to expose here today?

Fergus Doltus: There's an expression in the province of my origin Master Socrates: "Monkey see, monkey do."

Socrates: You seem to have learned little from our lesson today Fergus.

Fergus Doltus: I am most repentant oh wise one. How might I atone for this failing?

Socrates: How about 10 "hail Platons", and then ten hill repeats... Oh, and Fergus...

Fergus Doltus: Yes Master Socrates...

Socrates: Do them on Woodside.

Fergus Doltus: Thank you Master Socrates.

The Route Of The Assassins : Vancisle "300" (2002-04-27)

Harold Bridge

The history of the Human race is blotted with countless examples of Stupidity and Ego going hand in hand. One of the latest is someone in their seventies attempting the Vancisle 300 - twice! At least, the second time I got 83% done as against 50% the first time.

The 1994, June issue of "BC RANDONNEUR" contains an article, "Are We Having Fun Yet", by Gary Fraser. It describes the record ride he and brother Keith did on this torturous compilation of switchbacks, and it starts with a prologue that I deem worthy of repeat:

"1910: Tour de France founder Henri Desgranges extends the boundaries of the Tour to include the Pyrenean cols Peyresourde, Aspin, Tourmalet and Aubisque. At the time bears still inhabit the mountains and the roads are rough, stony paths. The climb up the Aubisque is especially brutal, and while waiting for the first riders to appear Desgrange worries that some of them may have slipped over the edge. At last one rider arrives on foot. He passes by without comment. After 15 more minutes elapse Oscar Lapize, future Tour winner, pulls into sight. Glaring at Desgrange, he speaks a single word: "ASSASSINS!"

1994: Vancouver Island 300 km randonnee route planners extend the boundaries of sanity to include some of the toughest hills your humble Boswell has ever encountered. Countless short snappers cumulatively drain all the zip out of my legs. At this time 15 foot lime-green bears with pink poms-poms inhabit my mind. The roads are rough. The climb up Humpback Road is especially brutal. Stephen Hinde is nowhere in sight. Worse still, I suspect he isn't too concerned about my slipping off into a huckleberry bush. At the top of the climb I pause and click out of my 23 tooth cog. With a keenly developed sense of melodrama I speak a single word: "ASSASSINS!"

Stephen Hinde is a nice chap but he has a problem, he gets bored very easily. He finds there is nothing more boring than a straight, flat road. As a result he has developed a genius for route design that avoids as much as possible those very boring bits of road. He reached his zenith with the Vancisle 300 route.

Two groups set out on this ride, the Bonner Poplawski lot from the Oak Bay control and our lot from Duncan. A facility opening time dictated that we couldn't start until 06:45, a

blessing in some ways, as it is quite a drive from Chez Hinde to Duncan. Assembled around the Passat were Stephen Hinde, Don Munroe, Cheryl Lynch, Keith Nichol and I. After diverting a wandering old chap who wanted some Ecstasy or something we set off about 06:50 heading down Island. The first hill a short way south was bye-bye time as Keith and Cheryl glided away from me. Don and Stephen were well capable of gliding away as well. But they had decided I needed looking after and so for them the ride became a series of intervals interspersed with stops while waiting for me, usually at the top of hills.

As the morning fog dispersed so the day showed promise that recent climatic conditions were not forever. And so it was, bright sun tempered by a cool breeze so the many tree-shaded pieces of the route were still cold and damp. It was a pleasure to turn off the Highway at Cobble Hill. But being Saturday morning there was a lot of traffic still. Alongside Shawingan Lake we enjoyed the scene and the big sprockets enjoyed the hills. Stephen's conscience must have been troubling him going by the number of times he remarked about how beautiful the route is! On the descent of the Malahat's south side my choice of a 50x14 top (94") was shown to be a bit on the low side. But why pedal at 50+kph?

Turning off the Highway at Sooke Lake Road, where the others stopped to remove clothes, my memory from 2 years ago reminded me that I was about to be faced with Humpback Road. But instead of relying on memory I tried to read my route sheet and got the next line's 4.3 km aligned with Humpback Road, not the 0.8 km. Luckily the road I took was a dead end and so I only added about 1.2 km to my total.

In 2000, with no previous knowledge of the area, I was taken unawares by Humpback's 25% grade up to the rail crossing and had to get off to walk. But in my cleated Duegis I actually slide back down the hill on the pea gravel surface! This time, the road had been resurfaced and the approach was quite smooth. I got into my 26x26 at the right time and dealt with Humpback with a fair amount of aplomb.

When I got to the Sooke Highway, #14, I wondered if Stephen and Don had got ahead of me during my detour. But almost immediately they were there and provided me shelter and comfort into the west wind, provided I could stay with them. In Sooke we turned off for the convoluted Otter Point circuit that finished up with an exhilarating drop down Kemp Road back to #14 and the 75.6 km control at Sea Otter Cove. Here Carol signed cards at 10:49,

Coming Events

Triple Mountain Challenge – Jun 15

8 am: Grouse Mountain
Parking Lot

Danelle Laidlaw 291-2508

S. Interior 600 – Jun 15-16

Ray Wagner 250-545-7165

Peace Region Pop. – Jun 15

50, 100 km: Fort St. John

Wim Kok 250-785-4589

1000 km – Jun 21-23

Various options—see web

Eric Fergusson 733-6657

Peace 600 km – Jun 22-23

600, 400 km: Fort St. John

Wim Kok 250-785-4589

Canada Day Ride – Jul 1

8-9:30 am: 135 km:

Fort Langley

Ian Stephen 576-4425

Peace Region Pop. – Jul 1

100, 150, 600 km: Fort St. John

Wim Kok 250-785-4589

Lower Mainland 200 – Jul 7

7 am: Fort Langley, Marina Park

Frances Caton 839-3801

L. Mainland Shorts – Jul 7

7:30 am: 150 km

9:00 am: 50, 100 km

Fort Langley, Marina Park

Bob Marsh 467-7065

Lower Mainland 300 – Jul 20

5 am: North Vancouver BC Rail

Station

Barry Chase 266-4214

Victoria Populaire – Jul 21

9 am: Oak Bay Beach Hotel

Mike Poplawski 250-882-1239

Rocky Mountain 1200 – Jul 24-28

Kamloops

Danelle Laidlaw 737-0043

Victoria 200 km – Aug 3

8 am: Tim Hortons, Gateway

Village

Mike Poplawski 250-882-1239

Seattle 200 km – Aug 3

6:15 am: Bremerton Ferry Term.

Terry

Zmrhal terryz@microsoft.com

58 minutes inside limit.

Hwy #14 back through Sooke was busy but at 91 km we turned onto Gillespie Road to seek out more monstrous hills in East Sooke and Rocky Point. And so through Metchosin, to a "Secret Control" outside a Danish Bakery (Revival and Survival!) before dropping down to the Causeway across Esquimalt Lagoon and up to Colwood and View Royal.

Over the blue Johnson Street Bridge I was in familiar surroundings and didn't need any help navigating through the dense traffic of Downtown Victoria to the hairpin loop west of the Legislative Building. It remained just to follow the coastline along to Oak Bay where the missing Carol caused some consternation. A cell phone determined she was looking for Cheryl and Keith somewhere in the vicinity of Sidney. The clerk in the 7-11, 148.0 km control provided a signature at 15:30, 67 minutes to spare!

I was wondering at this point whether I was going to survive and decided I would need enough time at Sidney, 185.3 km, to stop for a meal. The Saanich Peninsula isn't too difficult and we maintained steady progress juggling time and remaining energy. Shortly before Sidney I began to feel the occasional thump under me and on checking realised I had a slow leak in the back Continental Grand Prix 3000 700Cx25, the first puncture since installing them in September last year. I decided a pump up would get me to Sidney, which it did at 17:53 according to Carol's reckoning, and 1 hour and 13 minutes in hand.

Service at the Pantry was fairly quick and with help from all concerned I changed the tube after finding a small piece of glass had cut through the tyre. We set off for the delightful loop round Land's End before West Saanich and Wallace Roads took me into strange country. By this time it was dusk and our lights were on for the acid test on this route; Prospect Lake Road. Coming as it does at 222 km the frequent and brutal climbs provide a block to progress like no other. At this point too my left hand Ergopower gear lever was jamming up so that the rapid gear changes such a road requires were not on.

Progress to the final control at Colwood was painful. I unshipped the chain a couple of times, at the start of a climb of course, and that had me walking in cleats, very slowly. I told Don and Stephen to press on, but they wouldn't and despite my convictions to the contrary, Prospect Lake Road did finally come to an end. I had been having difficulty keeping the bike in a straight line and I was wandering all over the road. Riding the Highway under those conditions and with a painful knee was not on and so I quit at Colwood.

Don and Stephen had 11 minutes in hand there and provided they didn't waste too much time they should make up time from the summit of Malahat to the finish. Observations from the passenger seat of the Passat suggested the traffic on the Highway was fairly light and so the lads had a fairly easy ride to Duncan. The only consternation was some Club turning out as they passed by just before the finish, which they reached at 02:33 with a bit of a margin on the 20-hour limit.

I understand that even Cheryl had to walk some of the Prospect Lake Road hills. Gary Fraser writes about his 23-sprocket. I prefer double chainrings to triples, as the simplicity is an improvement. But there is a fantasy in vogue at present that low gears need a triple ring. If I could get the right chain set I

would use a double all the time. Something like 47/28 would do fine. But I would also be prepared to change sprockets to suit whatever I was planning to do. It doesn't make sense to tackle a ride such as this with an inadequate bottom gear.

My thanks to Stephen and Carol for the weekend. I had a great time despite the 300.

Top Ten Reasons I Returned to Randonneur Cycling

Gary Fraser

10. My 8 year suspension for testing positive after the 1994 400K finally came to an end.
9. I missed the warm, introspective conversations with Keith and Ted as we used to casually peddle the back roads of the Fraser Valley.
8. My new crew (mega-bucks lawyers Tony Crossman, Alistair Wade, Jerome Marburg, and Oleh Ilnycky - collectively the "Wheels of Justice") are paying me \$1,300 per ride.
7. I need the UCI points.
6. Keith's promise that a new road has been constructed which bypasses Woodside Hill.
5. The new B.C. rando rule allowing those riders 45 years and older to use small electrical motors to supplement pedal power.
4. I'm able to eat bananas again.
3. Fond memories of the Marysville main drag on a Saturday night.
2. The prize money... the glory... the sponsorship opportunities. and the **number one** reason I'm back in the saddle: I heard that Harold finally gave up toe-clips and I had to see this astonishing turn of events for myself.

The Reason I Still Use Toe Clips

Harold Bridge

Further to Gary Fraser's "Top Ten Reasons he Returned to Randonneur Cycling": He is about 8 years out of date with the rumour I had given up toe clips. I tried to do so during the winter of 1993/94. My feet wouldn't cooperate. It was all right during the winter when I was going out for a little 2 hour ride. But on a wet, cold March day when I did a 200 km ride my feet complained dreadfully. They have been spoilt by being accustomed to soft leather uppers that fit like a glove and those plastic boots from Shimano were a cruel awakening for my feet. It was a \$200 experiment but I was able to fob the shoes and pedals off onto someone.

When clipless racing systems first came out I couldn't see the point in using them if I still had to walk around at a control like a wounded duck. I figured then that it would be nice if someone created a system where the pedal had a lump on it and the shoe had a mating hole. Lo and behold Shimano produced their SPD system which seemed to fit the bill exactly. But not for me.

I guess I'm stuck with toe clips. I have 3 bikes. I have top quality pedals on each of them. One pair of Campy pedals came from UK with me when I emigrated in 1964. Replacing worn out equipment with new stuff is one thing. But throwing away perfectly good equipment just because it's old fashioned doesn't make sense, especially when on a pension.

As my black wooden soled Duegis, really meant for sprinters, were looking definitely the worse for wear I whinged to Duegi's website. They directed me to john.dacy@businesscycles.com in Miami. He had made a bulk order of the latest version of Duegi's sprinter shoes and had a pair of 42 left. I coughed up, with exchange, about \$350 and have them ready for when the old ones give up. Certainly, getting into toe clips at every traffic light and hobbling around on cleats are a nuisance. But on the pedals there is nothing like wooden soled Duegis with soft leather uppers. My arthritic ankle appreciates the support from the wooden sole too.

With those Duegis and my handmade British Leather touring shoes from Reynolds I can't see me going to clipless in this lifetime.

The Twist In The Tail: Lower (and Upper) Mainland 300 - 2002-05-04

Harold Bridge

The building contractor who employed carpenter Michel Richard on expensive houses on Westwood Plateau has a lot to answer for! It gave Michel a lot of nasty ideas. To make matters worse, Michel's co-conspirator Karen Smith has friends who live in a big house in Anmore, close to Buntzen Lake. They succumbed to her charms and agreed to have the final control at their house, and that didn't close until Sunday at 00:43! Of course, having a route coordinator who is always looking for new roads to use doesn't help; he goes along with these schemes.

As a means of avoiding a drive home after a long ride I usually arrange with the organiser to start an hour early and do the last part of the route first. That is, if the route passes by home and this one did. But the 14.5 km to Anmore was going to take me about 75 minutes and I would be outside the time limit by the time I got there. So, I rode the Vancisle 300 the previous week instead. But, having not finished that I decided to give the lower mainland one a go. Not having tackled long climbs like Westwood at the end of a 300 before I wasn't sure what my response would be. If I lasted long enough I would find out.

Forty-eight riders assembled at Burnaby Lake for the 06:00 start that actually happened at 06:05. That rain would accompany them round the Fraser Valley was a given. As they galloped off a sedate group quickly formed the rear guard and I was dragging out the back on every slope, I felt dreadful. Heart rate normally around 120 went up into the 140s as I struggled up toward the Pattullo Bridge. I knew that the first 20 km would take forever. The hills put me out the back and vulnerable to green lights suddenly turning amber.

Finally, as we got up to Whalley we gathered together ready to get rolling along the Fraser Highway. But of course, there's traffic lights at every intersection and one is through Langley before the route is clear of the blight of suburbia. For a change we went south on 240th to Zero Av as our approach to the first control at the Canada Customs station. Here a shivering pair of Cooks, Doreen and Gordy, were stamping and timing cards. They also had food available, something we haven't seen lately.

Those who still have speed in their legs can afford to waste time at controls. I can't. Get all done that has to be done, grab some food and eat it on the way: "The sooner we start the slower we can go" is a British Club motto and applies very well to riding

randonnees. It was a while before all were caught up and apart from the lumps on Vye Rd we were able to ride comfortably to Yarrow. A public facility caught my eye there and I off the back by a few minutes when my front tyre went flat shortly before the Vedder control. The event organiser being very helpful and trying hard to make up for the cruelty that was to come supervised the tube replacement.

I was beginning to settle down and started to think I could get as far as the halfway control at Johnson Slough. A big bowl of soup and muffin at the Vedder control made me feel human again and we set off on a very flat, wind assisted ride for the next 44 km. As we headed east at the Agassiz intersection we were able to check on the progress of some of the earlier riders fighting the headwind back from the control. I noted that Gary Fraser had decided to let brother Keith do his own thing, while he, Gary, took what shelter he could from a couple of other riders.

Last in, first out, I didn't stay too long with Bob and Patty Marsh at the rest area. I wanted to take my time on that drag back west so I could go over the top in company. It is a good road with a wide shoulder so that a 7 rider (Sharkey, Caton, Bailey, Bose, Brodie and Fletcher being the others) revolving pace line was set up to get us to Agassiz as efficiently as possible at about 18 kph into that stiff wind.

It was going to be a slog across Nicomen Island we thought. The trip up to Harrison was uneventful and it was a pleasure to use the back roads before hitting Hwy 7 and Woodside Mountain. Jack Sharkey on his ATB was having difficulty staying in contact and I think had to walk Woodside. I almost got to that, but a 26" gear (26x26) just about got me through that. A big incentive to stay in the saddle was the cleats on my shoes. Bob Bose on 30x26 (30") but wearing SPD's was encouraged to walk. (I've got 2 granny rings going spare Bob, a 26 and a 28; want to try them?).

It is said the sun shines on the righteous. It could also be said the wind drops for the righteous and once over Woodside we had a fairly comfortable ride back along 7. The weather had cleared up and the wind had dropped. THEN, we met the Mad Woman of Deroche. The policeman asked me if I wanted to lay charges and I declined, as there was no damage or injury. (But in fact I discovered 2 days later scabs on grazes on my knee where I had hit the road). Jack, with a daughter in Abbotsford, decided he would quit at Deroche and the Mountie gave him a ride.

A roadside conference between Lake Errock and Deroche, another one in Deroche where the woman had parked her Plymouth van by the phone box and yet another one on the approach to Mission where the Mountie stopped us to collect names, date-of-births, phone numbers and statements all must have cost the best part of an hour. Then we stopped at Rocko's in Mission for more soup before heading for Maple Ridge about 20:00 hours.

We arrived at the control in the rain. David Blanche did a trojan job signing cards there. One of my rear lights had quit on me, the one on the left of course. Michel swapped the good one and the bad one. He also tried to get my BB generator working. We both assumed it had succumbed to the rain and I had to do without that big beam. In the light of day on Sunday I saw the problem. One of the spade terminals had become disconnected! Think positively! After the Maple Ridge meander, by the Pitt River Bridge, I had to stop and replace dead batteries in my

Cateye Halogen. About then a toot-toot from a white Chrysler van denoted the McGuire passing by.

On the previous Thursday I had ridden from Port Coquitlam to Port Moody via the Westwood Plateau and Anmore route. I had planned to go the whole way to Burnaby. But while re-toothing my chain at Anmore I realised my pump was still sitting in the Hinde's car on Vancisle. So I turned for home. The ride from Oxford St at #7 Hwy to the Anmore control had taken 1 hour 4 minutes riding time or 70 minutes total. I guessed I would need between 80 and 90 minutes at the end of a 300. That meant I had to be at Oxford St by 23:15, latest. If I didn't make it I would go round the corner home.

We reached that watershed at 22:25 whereupon Bailey punctured. About 23:40 we set off, everyone following me, as I was the only one who knew where he was going. I will draw a veil over the traumatic grunt to Anmore, suffice to say we got to the control more-or-less at midnight, confirming my estimate. Descending Sunnyside with a hint of snow in the rain was made a bit of an adventure without my 6v Union headlamp and with brake levers getting very close to the 'bars.

But it was all over bar the shouting and once on the Barnet Hwy Bose took off like a scalded cat. We were together as we turned onto Sperling and I, smelling the barn, took off assuming everyone was there. Got to Broadway and had to wait for them all. Round the corner to find a happy Miss Smiff ready to sign our cards at about 01:30 Sunday morn. But, where was Bailey? He scraped in just in time having punctured again somewhere over the 300 km mark and virtually walking distance from the finish.

Now, three days later, I'm still tired. My left knee, where all the arthritis trouble started in 1994, is clicking and groaning. But I got a nice pin, designed by the very same Miss Smiff! Thanks guys, don't do it again, eh?!

Life Lessons from Cycling

Simon Goland

Some thoughts that crossed my mind during, and after, a 300 km bike ride on May 4. As I had plenty of time to think, I was looking at how the basics of cycling can apply to one's life.

Pace yourself. It is 6:00 AM, and the ride is about to begin. There is a certain excitement in the air, and I can feel the adrenalin rushing through me. Perhaps mixed with a bit of fear. Will I make it? And then, when the ride starts, I am cycling fast, running ahead, as if escaping from my own doubts and concerns. After a while, I slow down, relax into the ride, and find the pace that will carry me through, towards the end, about 18 hours later. Just like in life, when you are in for the long ride, slow down and find the pace that will take you to the end. Take a deep breath, look towards the end goal, and find the right pace that will take you there.

Use gears. Gears on a bicycle help us slow down and go faster. More importantly, gears help us find the right speed with the least effort at the right time. Learning how to work our gears, on a bike or in life, can go a long way to helping us in the manner in which we are going anywhere. Learning how to use our gears while cycling, as well as in life, is a life-long lesson. Some of us unfortunately spend our life riding into the wind, pedaling hard, wondering why life is such an effort. Alas, the fastest gear is not always the most efficient one to use.

And, while using gears, listen to your body. On this ride, I discovered that I had a habit of looking at what gear I was on, and whether it is the "right" gear to use on that particular terrain or whether I "should" be switching gears. I don't know where this habit is from, but it made a lot more sense to simply listen to what my legs were telling me. They knew when I needed to gear up or down. Our body always knows what is going on, and is communicating it constantly. Just stop to listen, preferably when it is whispering quietly, before it gets to loud screams.

Parts of the route I was cycling by myself. Parts with other cyclists. At times chatting, and at times being quiet, deep into my own world of thoughts. Just like the balance in life, between being with people, talking and connecting, and taking time for solitude, spending it in the company of your own thoughts. Both are necessary; both are equal partners in a person's life.

And I also reached the "cycling wall" - if there is such a thing. The experience was similar to the wall I hit two years ago, while running the Vancouver marathon. The conversation in my head went something like: "It is cold, I am wet and not enjoying the ride any more, my muscles and knees are tired and in pain, and why am I doing this ride anyway? Why would I even want to think of doing the longer rides?" And, just like in life, when you find yourself in one of these situations, what often works is focusing on one simple thing at a time. One small step after another. And another. And then one more. Just keep the momentum going, for the simple reason that there was a reason to be in that situation, or the bike ride, to begin with. Or even for no reason. This is the only way to move through the pain, both physical and mental. And then it all went away, suddenly, without a warning, and I was back, cycling and enjoying the ride.

And I wish you the same - just move through whatever seems to be impossible at the moment, and enjoy the ride. There is always something on the other side. Defeat is really temporary only. Giving up is what makes it permanent.

"If you want a rainbow, you have to put up with the rain." - Dolly Parson

Island 400

Stephen Hinde

The ride to Tofino is normally reserved for the lonely 600km rider, but the organizer felt like a challenge, so the Nanaimo--Tofino route was dusted off. Being an Island ride, we like to add small challenges to the route, so the plan was to have Cheryl Lynch and Keith Nichol start in Parksville at 4am, and chase down the other riders (Karen Smith, Michel Richard, Susan Allen, Doug Latornell, Stephen Hinde), who were to start in Nanaimo at 5 am. Unfortunately, Susan had some minor bicycle difficulties in Horseshoe Bay--a piece of wire wrapped itself in the rear spokes, pulled in the derailleur, and bent that nice new Vitalli frame. So, Doug and Susan didn't even get on the ferry.

Shortly after 5, still dark enough to require headlights, Karen, Michel, and Stephen set out for the west coast. Only 5km from the start we saw Cheryl and Keith, already 30 km into their ride, heading for the control. At our first pit stop by Lantzville, the sun broke the distant horizon, and the clear skies framed the Tantalus range near Squamish. We were wearing our warm clothing, as the headwind was cold. Climbing out of Nanoose, we first saw Mt. Arrowsmith, a distant snowy monolith. "Port Alberni is the other

side", I explained to Karen. "Really? It looks so far away."

We pressed on through Coombs (the goats are still on the roof). The small climb past Little Qualicum Falls helped warm us, but my feet were starting to tingle. "Not to worry," I thought, "the big climb is just ahead." After Cameron Lake, and another stop in Cathedral Grove to admire the trees, we tackled the hump. This is a 3 km 8% climb, with a short stretch of 10%. By the top my feet were beginning to tingle as the blood returned, but the wonderful, swooping descent into the Alberni valley (on fresh pavement!) soon put them back into deep freeze. In the distance, the western mountains were pure white.

A 25 minute stop at the 7-11 (the hot chocolate speeded the thaw), with control checker Carol Hinde running round in shorts (just to make us feel really cold), Cheryl and Keith pulled in. Keith had had a rocky start to the ride (he had knocked wheels with Cheryl at the start, and had come to an abrupt stop) and was sporting some impressive road rash. He was grumbling mightily, but was determined to push on, so we were off into the wilderness. Between Alberni and Tofino there are precisely zero services and one rest area. The ride along Sproat Lake was magnificent--the water was glassy, the sky bright, the mountains steep and snow-covered, and everything was green. And that was just the reflection. At a photo stop, I finally removed my rain coat--I was down to my Rando jacket and tights! At the base of Sutton pass, we came across a bear cub that had lost a fight with a car. Cheryl, being curious, found the bear still warm. At the top of the pass, Carol was waiting to sign our cards, fill our water bottles, and provide encouragement. So, it was time to be bold--down to shorts.

From Sutton Pass along the Kennedy river, there are some wonderful views of deep gorges and rushing water, most of them invisible to the motorist. Soon, paradise came to a crashing halt in the form of Hydro hill, a short (800m) climb posted at 18%. And then you go down the other side. And then you go up the next one. And then after a few kilometres of up and down, the road descends another 18%er to Kennedy Lake. From here to the Long Beach junction is 15 km of just average riding, with a nice ocean breeze in our faces, and a 5 deg. drop in temperature.

With 5 in a line up the peninsula, the wind didn't seem so bad. The large bear at the side of the road was spooked by the strange sight, so we didn't get a close look. That may have been a good thing, considering the size. The road doesn't actually run beside the ocean, except for one small stretch at Long Beach itself, where the azure water meets the verdant land in a line of sparkling surf, crashing in fury against the ancient granite, producing yet another grain of ... (Sorry about that--I don't know what came over me!) After leaving the park, the road undulates past motels and campsites, Crab bars and Whale tours into the environmentalist capital of Canada. 9 hours and 48 minutes for the 200.

Carol met us again, as we settled outside the Common Loaf Bakery (our usual haunt--the Alley Way Cafe--was closed) to replenish. Cheryl and Keith left just ahead of Karen, Michel and myself. "We'll take it easy--you'll catch us in no time". Well, Keith, you forgot that we couldn't pass that poetic stretch one more time without something coming amiss, so it was past the surfers, over the logs and onto the sand. Oh how we wanted to lie down in the sun for the rest of existence. And there wasn't a snake

in sight. "Back on the road, you scurvy lot" prodded some cruel organizer. Cast from Eden, the world seemed a harsher place, so we dragged our sorry butts back to the junction.

In reverse, the hills after Kennedy Lake are even more formidable. Or perhaps it is the extra miles in the legs? At the start of the first climb our average is 19.9 kph, just below schedule. At the start of climb 2 it's dropped to 19.8. "Not bad," I think. After descending climb 2 it's down to 19.6. Oh well, I really didn't want to break 20 hours. Climbing Sutton Pass in reverse is a none event. With a mild tailwind and a gentle slope, you are up before you know it. And there's the checkpoint--Carol with food and water. And all the clothes go back on, as it is now after 7 pm, and cold. The descent off Sutton Pass is usually the fastest portion of the ride--I hit 78.5 kph, the same as I did in '95, and '94, and '93, and '92. However, I am going too fast to see the spooked bear cub clambering up the tree that had Karen and Michel uuhing and aahing. Just outside of Port Alberni, it was time to turn on the lights, and to wake up Carol, sleeping at the side of the road. "Keith and Cheryl are just ahead of you--Keith had a flat." So, into Tim Horton's to fortify for the climb back over the Hump.

Climbing out of the Alberni valley is a one hour exercise, just grind away, and the top will arrive. And there is Carol, just checking to see if we're ok. "Put on all your warm clothing--the descent will be freezing." And she was right. I had to stop half way down to control my shivering that was threatening to put me in the ditch. From here, in the dark, the road back through Coombs to Nanaimo was tedious. How we envied Keith and Cheryl, finishing at Parksville (20 hours and 20 minutes). How we wanted to get to bed! We were not very efficient, but finally we reached the north edge of Nanaimo. "We could still break 22 hours," suggested some fool. That was all the encouragement that Michel needed. We were off, ala Bonner et al, through town with the long descent, to arrive back at the start in 21 hours 57 minutes.

This is a hard 400, and not one to set personal records, but under the near ideal weather conditions that we experienced, it is a ride that makes you come back for more. Perhaps I'll do this again next year. Special thanks to Carol who drove us to the start, saw us at every checkpoint, made sure we were still awake after dark, and then waited for us to finish.

Rice Energy Bar Recipe

Simon Goland

I recently stumbled upon an interesting recipe, which I tried during the last 300 ride. Here it is:

- ◆ 1 cup medium grain rice, cooked in 1 cup/250 ml water
- ◆ 4 tbsp wild rice
- ◆ 1 cup organic granola
- ◆ 1/2 cup each: chopped cashews and chopped dried apricots
- ◆ 4 tbsp each: raisins and chopped dried dates
- ◆ 1/2 cup each: all-purpose flour and packed brown sugar (personally, I use a lot less sugar)
- ◆ 1 tsp baking powder
- ◆ 1/4 tsp cinnamon
- ◆ 1 ml salt pinch
- ◆ 3 tbsp butter, melted
- ◆ 2 eggs, beaten, or 3 egg whites

- ◆ 1 tsp vanilla
- ◆ 1/2 cup maple syrup
- ◆ 1 tbsp sesame seeds
- ◆ 1 tbsp flaxseed

Cook rice according to package directions. In a large bowl, mix together medium and wild rice, granola, cashews, apricots, raisins, dates and flaxseed.

In small bowl, combine flour, brown sugar, baking powder, cinnamon, and salt; stir into rice mixture.

In separate bowl, combine butter, eggs, and vanilla; stir into rice mixture until well combined, using hands if necessary.

Press into 10 1/2" X 15" (26 cm X 38 cm) baking pan; stop with maple syrup and sprinkle with sesame seeds. Bake in 325F (160C) over for 20 minutes, or until golden brown. Let cool and cut into squares. Wrap each bar until needed or freeze.

And then watch yourself finish the brevets in half the time...

Island 400 (Victoria-Union Bay) Notebook

Mike Poplawski

This is long. You now have the option of doing this ride or reading about it.

Ahh, so you've chosen a rambling piece, rather than a piece to ramble.

Okay, the Island 400 km Brevet of May 11 started from Victoria with the familiar odd couple of Ken Bonner and your humble narrator, wanna-be Mike Poplawski.

Ken starts out at his own pace, and I try to hang on his wheel as long as I can, which some day might pay off for me--I was hoping today would be the day. After about 20 some minutes, on the first Malahat climb, I realized that I wasn't going to stick with him much longer, and I turned my effort down to my comfort level, which left me behind. Considering what happened the rest of the day, I have to wonder if it made any sense to hang on as long as I did?

The Malahat was very dark--a new moon, so lots of stars out (and one well up the road by this point), a reasonable number of trucks, no yahoos spotted and a pretty view of Sidney's light show before the sun came up!

I didn't have to share my descent into Bamberton/Mill Bay with any drivers, which was great! The shoulder coming down the Malahat is not good, while the regular road surface is, and I practiced my hands-on-the-tops descending. As I put my chin on my computer, I was none other than the Falcon, Paolo Savoldelli! Well, okay, I'm merely dressed like a Saeco rider, and 62 km/h is not exactly a blur. Damn.

My first stop of the day was between Mill Bay and Cobble Hill to put on a set of liners under my thermal gloves. I checked my computer to see that my stop only took two minutes. NB This is blatant foreshadowing.

Upon arriving in Duncan, I did what any sensible randonneur would do who wanted to get out of the cold for a few minutes, fuel up and replenish supplies--I stopped at a randonneur-approved establishment for soup, hot chocolate and a biscuit. Yes, none other than Tim Horton's! After 2:20 riding (I still had hope for a good ride time, you see, I made note) I would stop in for 15-20 minutes, have a good feed and get rolling.

This is where the adventure starts.

I had my first experience of losing body heat while eating

warm food--no matter how many spoonfuls of broccoli & cheese soup I ate, or how close to my core (read: crotch) I placed my hot chocolate, I could not stop shivering. I tried to dry my supposedly moisture-wicking synthetic turtleneck, but I think it must really work only when it can wick moisture into another fabric layer. Something like that, because the washroom hand-dryers were making almost no headway. Finally, after almost an hour of shivering, it occurred to me that my long-sleeve cycling jersey was safe and dry on my bike, and that putting it on might do the trick. It did, and at 6:30 (and over an hour off the bike out of 3:30 event time), I was on my way again.

(Actually, this reminds me of the halfway point of the Fleche I rode in 2001, only when the 2001: A Fleche Odyssey team reached Marblemount, WA for breakfast, there were no dry clothes to change into, and the restaurant we were eating at must have had A/C that turns itself on when it rains outside. I hit the road shivering that day.)

Things were uneventful up to Nanaimo, except for my blundering at a traffic signal entering Ladysmith (I was gawking at some early-morning cyclists heading for Chemainus Road) and running a red light. Oops. I kept my head down and was relieved to see no flashing lights. I was watching my computer and noticed that I still had a shot at reaching the first control around 8:00 AM, which is the time I made the previous two times I've done this route. I arrived a little later, about 8:15, and picked up some food at the 7-Eleven--some Carnation Instant Breakfasts and the obligatory banana.

Here's a bit of delicious irony: after asking Ken about Carnation Instant Breakfasts at the start of the ride, he recommended them, since he felt they tasted better than the Boost or Ensure drinks that I've tried in the past. Well, I got to confirm Ken's opinion twice--both on the first can, once each way. Sorry, I had to say it.

So here I was, 108 km into the ride, and experiencing the precious novelty of becoming ill during a brevet. I took some deep breaths, sipped some water, mixed some more Hydra Fuel and like any bold randonneur would, I pointed my bike north. The sun was out, and I was going to ride my bike all day, knowing that I was writing a good story.

The rest of Nanaimo was cool winds and stop lights, but it ended soon enough and it was back onto the newish highway for some cruising. It really was a beautiful day to ride, and the winds behaved themselves--nothing too harsh either way. The mountains were gorgeous.

Thinking about getting some food in me again, I stopped at the Subway in Parksville for a small sandwich a Mountain Dew and a cookie, and hoped it would stay down. Satisfied after the short stop, I admired a local (some dude who walked with a cane, unnecessarily) and proceeded once again, food staying down but dogging me with about 20 minutes of hiccups. Loads of fun--I haven't had hiccups in how long?

The stretch through Qualicum was beautiful, as usual, and I made good, steady progress. It does help to know the route! As I sensed my supplies running low, I stopped in at Bowser for the first time ever at a grocery store. I can't remember the name of the store, but it was popular, and it was no secret why--it was a local cold beer & wine outlet.

After a brief scare (empty toilet paper dispenser) and

immediate relief (rolls on the toilet tank) and a refill of water and a little bite, next stop was the the turnaround control at Union Bay.

I'm not sure where the 160 km mark on the route is, but that's where I saw Ken heading the other way, moving as smoothly as a Swiss train moving along to the next Hof. I immediately tried to think of ways to put a positive spin on being over 80 km behind the champ...

Union Bay was simply glorious--again, the view across the strait was simply amazing, and the Union Bay market has a wonderful ice cream cooler filled with goodies chilled to a perfect temperature. Not really needing to, but just enjoying the moment, I put on some more sunscreen, enjoyed an Oreo Bar and a few other things while laying on a patch of grass outside the store enjoying the wonderful sunshine and temperatures of the early afternoon.

If you haven't been to the Union Bay market, it has all kinds of quirky decorations. The one that stuck out for me this time was a large urn with an ash tray on top. Painted on the urn is Bugs Bunny (copyright infringements abound here) smoking a cigar, and the urn is emblazoned "Ash-Hole". Little things like that make these rides worthwhile!

Back on the road, my suspicions were confirmed--I had been riding into a headwind for about an hour into Union Bay, and I had the wind working for me on the way south. This was especially comforting, since my 2001 ride felt like I was pulling a parachute, and I distinctly remember not shifting into my large chainring for several hours.

So, with the friendly winds, I had a delusion that after a 10-hour trip north, I would have a negative split on my ride and have something like the sub-19-hour ride I had in 2000. A randonneur full of hope!

I was back in Bowser for another fill-up in seemingly no time, and to my surprise I saw the house opposite had a bicycle hanging on the front gate. Whoever lived there advertised some kind of bike museum, and if only I had I been making Bonner-time on my ride, I would have checked it out. Next year, eh?

On my way through Qualicum Beach, I stopped like I had the year before--last year just to lie down and wait for winds to die down, this year to fix a slow leak that came on after a series of railroad crossings. (I found I had a snakebike puncture, so I'm guessing that's what it was.) The fix of my front tire was quick enough, and after a brief stop at a public washroom, I was on my merry way again, but I was noticing that I was not riding particularly fast. My body just wasn't taking to water and food the way I liked, but I never felt like I was in any real jeopardy of finishing the ride.

My riding was, like I said, not my best, but I found I was able to stand often without any cramping problems, so I felt very good about that. I felt good that I could relieve the pressure of the saddle well and keep my momentum up pretty consistently. My average speed on the bike was staying right around 26.5 km/h all day.

It was starting to cool as I made it to Nanaimo and its series of traffic lights. Unfortunately, strip mall hell is no place you want to stop over and over again to admire "scenery". The third control came at 5:32 PM, after 294 km, and I had about 109 km to go, including the Malahat. I knew I'd be using my lights!

The air became a little cooler every hour, and I made a few stops for clothing adjustments, which got a little annoying, but I did feel good about the breathers. This was a survival ride, and the Sour Patch Kids I was using as Happy Food were probably not helping my stomach in the long run. I found I wasn't really drinking a lot of water or sports drink, but I kept on going, which was the important thing.

My last stop was my traditional one in Cobble Hill for my Coke and nacho chips which I so savour...I was glad to have made it to the store by 9 PM, since they close then. My appetite had left me, so I left some of each goodie behind, and it was on to tackle my nemesis--the climb out of Shawnigan Lake.

Battling drivers who don't turn off their brights (I gave a happy nod to those that do), I felt good about my ride up the hill, which in the past has left wondering why I do these rides at all. This time, with only a minimum of 30 x 27 riding, I was up and out of there in what seemed like no time, and back to the familiar comfort of the darkened Malahat descent. Time to bundle up!

The ride down was no problem at all, until I approached Goldstream Park, when it hit. Okay, *they* hit. I ran over what seemed to be two pieces of lumber or branches (I was moving over 40 km/h, and it was quite dark), and thankfully, they were perpendicular to the roadway or else I might not be writing this story. After bringing my bike to a stop about a km later, with only a flat tire the apparent damage, I walked to a clearing I knew was up ahead just across from the Goldstream Park parking lot entrance.

When I arrived, there was a couple waiting for me in their truck to help me out, for which I'm grateful--I even sent a note to the Victoria Times-Colonist thanking these anonymous people for stopping to help, and explaining just exactly why a) someone is riding the Malahat at 10:00 PM and b) why they won't accept help when their bike doesn't work. I'm glad I had a nice night and some power left in my halogen headlamp to make a simple rear tire change. The wheel banged against my brake pads, though (turned out I had a dented rim), so I had to limp home with only a front brake for the last 15 km. Both bike and rider, battered and weary, made their way out of the park and on the way home.

At 11:30 PM I reached the finish, and after my longest-ever 400 at 20:30, I was done, but I knew that this had become a 2-day adventure, as I wouldn't get home until after midnight. What a day to be a randonneur, though, with the beauty of this ride (I estimate about an hour of five off the bike was due to how nice the day was), and the residual thought of improving my speed and efficiency to enjoy all of this in the daytime some day! But as a mere mortal who can't ride a 400 and be home in time for dinner and dancing, I'm glad I have a pin from this ride, and a story or two to tell (I've probably forgotten something good). Fantastic stuff!

If you don't need some clothing- then you haven't been riding enough!

Danelle Laidlaw

Don't forget we have shorts and a few pairs of tights (\$55 - Visa, \$50 Cash/chq) and jerseys - \$75 (BC and a few Cdn) for sale - contact Danelle at 604 291-2508.