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British Columbia

Randonneur

Marathon Cycling

Madam Prez Says

Danelle Laidlaw

I hope that most of you had a chance to attend the Touring Seminar recently hosted by the Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition and the Vancouver Bicycle Club. It was a good event – well organized and well attended.

The venue for the seminar was the Vancouver Racquets Club at 33rd and Ontario. The small room was well suited to the displays of a few clubs and advocacy groups, a couple of touring companies, and provided sufficient space for the 5 or 6 talks which were given by experienced cyclo-tourists.

Bruce Mol deserves the kudos for pulling this event together. He put together a solid team who within an amazingly short space of time got the speaker list lined up, the displays co-ordinated, and set about publicizing the event and were successful at all of it.

The BC Randonneurs were invited to attend and we used the forum to promote our newly published Randonneur schedule and up-coming Pacific Populaire event. There was lots of good interest and many people who attended had already ridden in the Populaire, or were already planning on doing it. Our thanks to Ian Stephen for organizing the table and staffing it, and to Bob Marsh for assisting him. Other randonneurs - Doug Latornell and Susan Allen, and Henry Hulbert - were among the invited speakers and did a great job.

And thanks to the organizers of the Seminar - hopefully we will see it happening again next year.

HELP NEEDED !!

The Randonneurs could use help at all the rides this year, and it can be fun! If you or a friend or family member would like to spend a few hours at a control please call the ride organizer or a coordinator.

- ◆ Greater Vancouver Coordinator – John Bates 604-528-2081
- ◆ 50-100-150 km Coordinator - Bob Marsh 604-467-7065
- ◆ April 22nd Rides (50-100-150-200 km) - Dan McGuire 604-942-3235

Prizes, prizes, prizes! Thank you, thank you, thank you!

Ian Stephen and Danelle Laidlaw

The success of our Spring Social this year was in no small part due to the generosity of a number of benefactors who provided door prizes for us to give out. Their goodwill allowed some very deserving people to be recognized and rewarded for their contributions to the club, as well as allowing us to give prizes to many in attendance at the social.

Prizes were donated by (in no particular order):

- ◆ Reckless the Bike Store,
- ◆ Carleton Cycle and Outdoor Recreation,
- ◆ The Bike Cellar,
- ◆ La Bicicletta,
- ◆ Cloverdale Cycle Centre,
- ◆ Mountain Alpine Sports
- ◆ and Tour BC.

They (whoever they are) say 'what goes around comes around'. Lets make that saying true in this case and return some of this goodwill to those who gave it to us. Be sure to thank them personally when you patronize them.

Fleche 2000

Neil Jorgensen

It all seemed like such a good idea at the time. Larry asked me if I would like to be on a

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Fleche team with him. He was looking for an extra team member who could start on Friday. Rainy and Joe wanted to ride, but had to be back in Vancouver Sunday morning so they could run a marathon. Dave was going too, but the team needed one more person so that three could attend the Sunday breakfast. The advantage was that we would get to stay in a cabin at Harrison Hot Springs and use the pools and other facilities Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning. In return we would help check in the other teams as they finished. Yes, it seemed like a good idea. And it was several weeks away.

The next step was to choose a route and submit an entry. After much measuring from maps and checking route sheets from other rides, we came up with a fairly flat 365 km course. Since none of us wanted to work too hard, this seemed about perfect. However, the route police decided that we only had 360 km, which left no margin for error. So we added a 4 km out and back to give us 368. Unfortunately it was over the top and down the other side of a nice little hill, and ditto on the way back. No big deal early in the ride but we would be doing it in the middle of the night, just before our sleep break.

On the big Friday morning the weather looks shaky but the forecast is for sunny breaks later in the day. As we drive to our start point in Harrison the weather gets worse. At Harrison we grab a quick meal and prepare to leave. It is raining and cold. Shivering begins as we organize our bicycles and get ready. This is the first time I've worn my big jacket for serious cycling. I also wear my rain pants, plastic bags on my feet, over mitts and wish I had more clothes with me. At last we begin, only a few minutes past our official start time of noon.

Riding is uneventful and wet. However, by the time we get to Hope, the rain has stopped and things are looking better. We have a good tail wind up to our first check point at Yale. After some hot soup, we head back to Hope, with our rain gear packed. The tail wind is now a head wind but it's not too bad. A quick stop in Hope, including a visit to a friendly gas station to get some

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Editor: Susan Allen

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 May 24, 2001.

lubricant for my squeaking chain, and we're off towards Chilliwack. The sun is shining, jackets have been shed and life is looking good. Even the wind has dropped.

The ride continues well. There is a time of concern as we watch the approach of a very dark cloud which is obviously carrying rain, but it passes to the north of us. We get hit with only a couple of minutes of light rain while we watch the sun return.

Next stop is the Pointa Vista Café. After a piece of pie and a drink, I'm feeling well and ready to start again. But in the few minutes it takes to get organized outside I start to shiver. I notice that I can see peoples breath steaming. The jacket goes back on and we head off. My teeth are chattering until we climb a small hill, which warms me up.

An uneventful ride to Mission follows. It gets dark but for the most part traveling is pleasant. We are surprised by a secret control. In fact we ride right by, waving at John as we go. He has to shout us down before we realize that we're supposed to stop. We avoid hazards on the road surface of the Mission bridge. Rainy doesn't have her good glasses with her, because they are in her van which is in the shop for seemingly endless repairs. So she finds it really hard to see on the dark bumpy roads we ride on to avoid a hill, but we all survive.

In Mission we stop at a restaurant with great hot chocolate. I am comfortable in the café, but the second I get outside I start to shiver. It must be a combination of damp clothes and fatigue. By the time we're ready to ride, I'm shivering uncontrollably. As we start off I find that my bike is shivering with me. I'm so cold that I can't hold it steady. There is no convenient hill to warm me up so I have to resort to plan B. I grab my brakes to add resistance and pedal hard to keep moving. My virtual hill works and the furnace cranks up again. I'm comfortable, can release my brakes and ride on. We head for Burnaby and a few hours sleep.

Fatigue and increasing cold are taking a toll. There are a lot of washroom breaks and Dave gets diarrhoea. We figure it's the beet juice he's drinking. And it's getting harder to find washrooms as the hour gets later. At one point our fearless leader Larry shouts out the warning "glass!" I look up, see a clear path through the glass and steer. Clunk, pssshhh, obviously I did not choose wisely. Fortunately it is the front tire which is easy to change. Fortunately, we are right by a street light so I can see what I am doing. Unfortunately, my hands are numb with cold so I keep dropping my tire irons. However the change is successful, if not fast, and we get underway again. We'll be at our sleep stop soon!

I don't know about soon, but we do get there. Up the Barnett Highway, over the hill along Hastings Street to our check point, control cards signed, back up and over the hill, up the last short but disgustingly steep pitch to Larry's house and we're there. Pizza waiting for us in the oven, and hot showers and beds. We're too tired to eat but the shower is wonderful. I fall into bed about 3:15 AM, with my alarm set for 5:15. Oblivion comes quickly.

"Who set that alarm for this unholy hour!" Oh it was me. Time to get up (I really don't want to). Upstairs, as we grab a slice of pizza for breakfast, I study the weather from the kitchen window. It rained hard over night, but the weather is breaking to the west. I almost leave my rain pants behind to save weight. At the last moment sanity prevails and I pack them. At 6:00 we head off. Next stop Mission.

Yes it looked like the weather was breaking up to the west.

Unfortunately, we are going east. We catch up with the storm on the Barnett Highway. By the time we get to the Pitt River Bridge, I am getting very wet. I wheel off into a gas station and use their covered area as a dressing room. The rest keep going and I'm not sure I'll see them again. On go the foot bags (my feet are SO cold), the rain pants, the mitts and anything else I can find. Then it's back on the road again. I knew I didn't want to get up this morning.

Did I say it was raining at the start yesterday? I was wrong, that was just a light drizzle. This is rain, good Wet Coast rain. I can't decide whether I would be better off trying to see through my water soaked glasses or go with bare eyes blinded by raindrops. I decide to wear the glasses as my helmet visor keeps a narrow strip at the top dry. I hunker down and keep pedalling. This is supposed to be fun?

I see something ahead that looks like it might be a wet cyclist. As I ride on wondering if I will catch up with him, I notice how fast the water is rushing along in the ditch. It must be raining somewhere.

It is a cyclist. It's Larry, who got me into this in the first place. Maybe I'll run over him! But I'm feeling too miserable to make the effort. Rainy and Joe have stopped into a convenience store for a break - I can't understand why - and my buddy is waiting for me. Dave is nowhere to be seen, he's probably already in Mission. Larry and I carry on leaving the people in the warm and dry to catch up later. Team solidarity is breaking down. And it rains.

Will we never reach Mission? I'm getting genuinely hungry! I have some food in my jersey pocket but it's out of reach under my jacket. Even if I could get to it, it would be hard to unwrap a granola bar while wearing mitts. I don't want to stop and open my jacket in the rain, and I certainly don't want to take off my mitts. So I ride on feeling sorry for myself.

Finally, we reach Mission. We are together again as we go in to our favorite restaurant. Here we discover that angels do exist and the owner is one of them. He takes pity on our sodden selves, opens up an extra room and moves a big table over next to the fireplace. Wonderful heat is well appreciated. Hot chocolates served in large mugs warm hands wrapped around them. Cheerful servers bring us breakfast quickly. I have the large French toast breakfast which includes two eggs, French toast, bacon and hash browns. When I'm finished I figure that I should have ordered a side of toast as well. But time is getting short.

Energized by the food and warmth we prepare to leave. The café owner asks us if there

is anything else he can do for us. Someone asks if he can keep our hands dry. As it turns out he can. He gives us each a pair of latex gloves from the kitchen, which protect our hands from our soaked cycling gloves. Thank You!

The rain has almost stopped as we head off on the final leg. Maybe that good weather that I saw earlier is catching up with us. Down the road I see a person beside an open backed van waving to us. I figure he is selling fruit or seafood and thinks we may be good prospects. As we get closer we all realize that it is another secret control and we have to stop and get our cards signed. We're so late that he calls this stop our 22 hour control and we don't have to stop at Lake Erock as planned. Good, we need all the help we can get.

On we go. People are stopping to take off rain gear as the weather gets better. My jacket and mitts come off as the sun appears and I feel much more optimistic. Now it's labour up the last hill and fly down the other side.

We need to average at least 25 km/h over the last 10 km. The pace is set. As we ride along Dave says that we should slow down to keep the group together. A few minutes later, Dave looks at his watch and mentions that we are going to have to speed up if we are going to make it on time. So it is sprint (?) to the finish, 6 km away. As we come into Harrison we are greeted, appropriately, by a hail storm. That stuff stings even through clothes. But we are on time. My watch says exactly noon, Larry's reads 11:59. We decide that 11:59 looks better and go with it.

But wait - Joe is missing. Oh there he is, running through the hail, pushing his bike. The flat tire demon bit him a couple of blocks from the finish and he had to make a run for it.

With our control cards signed, we part company. Rainy and Joe head back to Vancouver and the rest of us head for the cabin. A hot shower and soak in the hot pool feel marvelous. Then it's time for lunch, a nap, supper and sleep. Now that we've finished, the weather is lovely.

Sunday morning we get ready to greet the other teams. They are cold but upbeat. Later at the buffet breakfast, we applaud each other as we get our pins, and tell tales of mechanical failures and getting lost. There were only a couple of people who did not finish and the mood is one of happy congratulation. It's a beautiful day when we get back to Vancouver. It's warm, the sun is shining and it looks like summer. It would be a great day for a bicycle ride.

Coming Events

Island 200 – Apr 14
50, 100, 150 also available
Stephen Hinde 250-245-4751

Peace Populaires I – Apr 14
50 & 25 km: Fort St. John
Wim Kok 250-785-4589

Seattle 300 - Apr 14
7 am: Bainbridge Is. (catch
6:20 ferry from Seattle)
Bill Dussler bdussler@gte.net

Peace Populaires II – Apr 21
75 & 50 km: Fort St. John
Wim Kok 250-785-4589

L. Mainland 200 – Apr 22
7 am: Surrey Sports & L.C.
16555 Fraser Highway
Dan McGuire 942-3235

L. Mainland Shorts – Apr 22
50,100,150, 7:30 am: Surrey
Spts. 16555 Fraser Highway
Bob Marsh 467-7065

Fleche Northwest -Apr 27-29
Finish Semi-ah-moo
See web site (Seattle Randos)

Kamloops 200 – Apr 28
Kamloops
Bob Boonstra 250-828-2869

Island 300 – Apr 28
Stephen Hinde 250-245-4751

Peace Populaires III - Apr 29
100 & 75 km: Fort St. John
Wim Kok 250-785-4589

L. Mainland 300 km – May 5
6 am: Burnaby Lake
Deirdre Arscott 222-3587

Peace Populaires IV – May 6
160 & 100 km: Fort St. John
Wim Kok 250-785-4589

Interior 300 km – May 12
Revelstoke
Ray Wagner (250) 545-7165

Fleche Pacifique: May 18-20
Entry due: Friday April 28
Keith Nichol 733-5697

Signs of Spring – May 20
200 km: Fort St. John
Wim Kok 250-785-4589

So what's the deal with these time limits anyway?

Eric Fergusson

I've been asked this question, maybe not in exactly these words, quite a few times over the past four years while my name has appeared as information contact person in our club schedule/brochure, and I must say I haven't been able to defend our policy with much conviction. I usually say that the time limits are for the practical management of controls so that volunteers aren't forced to stay at remote locations for longer than they have to. And then typically I offer these words of assurance: "It's unlikely that you or I will be outside the time envelope no matter how fast or slow we are riding."

As time goes on I'm finding my own words on this subject increasingly problematic, and at odds with the way I feel. I've been wondering lately if our time limits aren't an anachronism, and whether there is any justification, practical or otherwise, for them except that they've always been there. It's interesting to note that there is no fast end limit for the '80 hour' group at PBP. I'm wondering now about the limit at the other end of the speed spectrum too, and what we are trying to accomplish through it. I think it's time to take a closer look at both the fast-end and slow-end time limits and how they are shaping randonneur cycling.

At the core of the sport of randonneur cycling is the notion that we are testing our limits. We stretch ourselves while striving to achieve various goals in a difficult activity frequently under difficult conditions. This sport is not for everyone. Our goals are often very personal, and are often related to our finishing time. What happens when a rider who is doing exactly the same activity as the rest of us, and who has the same sorts of goals, is excluded from the sport, for no reason other than the fact that rider is different from you and me? What justification is there for excluding that rider?

The difference I am talking about is of course a rider's cycling speed, and I think you can probably guess my next point: I don't think that people should be excluded from the sport of randonneur cycling on the basis of their cycling speed.

It goes without saying that cyclists come in all speeds. In our sport, 'going the distance' is the name of the game - a common goal we all share. The exertion required merely to finish will naturally vary wildly. A rider pushing hard at the slow end of the time envelope may be making a greater effort, and indeed showing more determination and courage, than a stronger cyclist in cruise mode riding many hours up the road. This is OK...people are different, and both riders should have the freedom to choose their effort level. In the end, both riders have an equal claim on the accomplishment of finishing the brevet, and they both have the same pin in that little glass jar on top of their dressers. Great. But what if that determined slow rider finishes outside the time limit? Are we really saying that this rider is not worthy? If forced to make a choice, I frankly would be tempted to value the determination of the slow rider over the casually-employed, natural athletic gifts of the faster rider. The fact that we are excluding the slower rider altogether is, I feel, a serious concern.

Our absolute time limits are a means of discriminating against cyclists on the basis of speed. And it's a discrimination

that indirectly runs deeper - our age, sex, whether we have a disability, and even whether we can afford a fast bike, are all factors affecting our cycling speed. We don't have to look very hard to see how this problem has been addressed elsewhere...

Marathon running is a sport in which people test their limits. They stretch themselves while striving to achieve various goals in a difficult activity frequently under difficult conditions. This sport is not for everyone. Their goals are often very personal, and are often related to their finishing time. In 1978 my mother was coerced into running the Toronto Marathon. I was surprised to learn from her recently how restrictive the time limit was in those days - 4½ hours. By 1986 when my wife ran Toronto the limit had been stretched to 5 hours, and the limit has been relaxed since then as well - the roads now close to participants moving slower than a 12 minute mile pace (the roads...but not the sidewalks.) The Toronto Marathon, now called the Canadian International Marathon, is actually unique among marathon running events today in that it warns "No Walkers Allowed" in order to discourage prospective slow finishers from entering, and clogging up the roadways. (Keeping the streets clean has always been important in To!) Nevertheless, even in Toronto, finishers coming in at 7 hours and beyond last year were listed as official finishers on the web site, and all were awarded finisher's medals.

Upping the ante one step further... As you might expect, the Boston Marathon (where participants must have exceptional qualifying times to even apply to enter) is strict about its time limit. Yet even here, at the most prestigious and competition-minded mass marathon in the world, the time limit stands at 6 hours - a slow jog. In fact in most large-city 'people's marathons' the limits have been discarded and the events are virtually open ended - at a certain point the route is reopened to vehicle traffic, but armies of slow joggers and walkers finish on the sidewalks. At the end of the day (and in some marathons, often it is the end of the day) these walkers, these shufflers, these 'penguins' all wear the same finisher's medal as the fast and medium paced runners who finish hours earlier.

There has been a healthy worldwide trend towards the democratization of the sport of distance running, a reflection of the fact that runners are not all created equal, but that they still may want to do the same activity. The enviable result of this change in attitude has been that many more people have become runners, and the notion that the races are for high performance athletes only is gone forever. Some factions within the endurance-running establishment have resisted these changes, but these voices have been drowned out. It's been a case of power to the people, and I think this is a revolution which most of us can celebrate.

It is also worth pointing out that in the sport of marathon and ultra marathon running, high performance athletes are also not excluded. It would be absurd to suggest that people in a marathon were not permitted to go as fast as they wish and that they face disqualification for getting to the finish too soon. In randonneur cycling this absurdity is a reality.

It's true that most cyclists would never find themselves up against the existing fast time limit unless riding on a particularly easy course - an extremely flat course, let's say. Well of course we have one of those particularly easy, extremely fast courses here in British Columbia, and for the past couple of years randonneurs

have been showing up at the Country Market control near Rosedale, on the Fall Flatlander 200, well ahead of the control's opening time. Even riders in no particular hurry have found themselves standing around, munching cookies, and trying to get a handle on this whole time limit rule thing. Last year there were five of us standing around (though not at the same time because of a staggered start time for the benefit of the sign-in volunteers) tapping our cleats at Rosedale, and two more riders who arrived at the control shortly after its 'opening time'. A full 14% of participants (5 out of 36) were well ahead of the limit (19% if you count those two riders coming in.) I might add that the usual Lower Mainland speedsters, Ted and Keith, were not even riding that day and so were not in this advance party – the offending group was comprised of admittedly quick, but not necessarily elite cyclists. This tells me that we have a problem.

When I suggested recently to the BC Randonneur committee that this was a problem, my concerns were dismissed pretty absolutely. In a nutshell, here was the response: "If those guys want to go so fast, why don't they buy themselves racing licenses!" And also: "Keith Fraser regulates [slows] his pace so that he comes into the controls as the controls open". As for this latter point, our time limit rule is simply forcing a square peg into a round hole - why shouldn't Keith be allowed to go his pace? The former quip, however, about the racing licenses, gets more the core of our sport's discrimination against, and indeed curious contempt for, fast cyclists. And of course this attitude is a self-regenerating one because the rules we have established already exclude very fast and very slow riders. We have become an autocracy of medium paced cyclists - naturally there's no one around the table to speak for the people we have chosen to exclude.

The thing about fast cyclists is that they are like slow cyclists: they can't help how fast they are capable of riding. In randonneur cycling, we status quo medium paced cyclists can go as fast as we want - we are free to strive for our personal bests, to test our personal boundaries, and the limits of our endurance. Why don't we allow fast cyclists to do the same?

Here's an argument I'm sure some of you have heard: "The removal of the fast limit would encourage racing and there would be dangerous risk taking at the front of the pack." I've never bought this rationalization. I've seen appalling risk taking and dangerous cycling practices in the middle of the pack, and Keith and Ted and Ken are actually extremely disciplined and relatively cautious cyclists.

I suggest that speed has nothing to do with safe cycling practices. If safety is our concern, my feeling is that the two closely linked rules we need to cling to are these: randonneur cycling should remain resolutely amateur so that there's nothing at stake in 'winning', and secondly, the first rider to finish should continue to be considered the 'first finisher' - the first among equals – and not 'the winner', and should receive no special demarcation (trophies, prizes, etc.) Keith Fraser's pin jar looks a lot like yours and mine, and this is as it should be.

Fast cyclists determined to break the sound barrier should be free to do so. My guess is that they would not resort to dangerous racing tactics (...solo break aways launched at a red lights...) because working together with other similar paced, like-minded cyclists, would give them what they are really after - higher speeds and faster times. My prediction is that if the fast end time limit

were thrown away, from a safety standpoint, nothing would change.

I certainly can't think of a compelling argument for keeping the limits that we have institutionalized, but I'm wondering if there isn't at least a historical explanation for them. Imagine for a moment that the existing time limits were even more restrictive, dramatically restrictive - where participants all had to ride at virtually the same pace. I think that with these rules in mind, groups of cyclists of roughly equal cycling strength would naturally band together and would probably designate one rider as a pacesetter. This person would be in charge of ensuring that the group stayed within the limits - no rider would be permitted to go ahead of the pace setter, and no rider would be allowed to drop off the back. Sound familiar? Yes, this is audax style cycling. (Hence the labelling of our key international institutions: Audax Club Parisien, Audax UK, Audax Australia, etc...)

Actually, I have only very limited knowledge of audax style cycling, so I might not have all of the above details correct. I will concede that it sounds appealing enough - an endearing and sociable 'gentlemen's sport'. I'm wondering, however, if it really has any relevance to the sport of randonneur cycling as it has evolved and whether lingering sentiments about it should continue to be a factor in the configuration of the contemporary rulebook. I might add that the opportunity to practice audax cycling within a brevet would in no way be adversely affected by throwing away the time limits. Indeed, very fast and very slow riders would suddenly be able to engage in audax style cycling, and on their own terms.

In concrete terms what am I suggesting? I'm saying we should eliminate the time limit for fast cyclists, because it serves no purpose. Ride organizers can still predict when control monitors need to be at their posts because there is a natural limit to how fast even the fastest cyclist can get from point A to point B.

On the slow end there may still be a practical limit to how long we want to burden a ride organizer with concerns of riders' safety out on the course, especially on longer brevets. And how far can the time confines of a ride be stretched and still satisfy even a very relaxed definition of what constitutes a distinct ride? Could we, for example, allow a participant a week, or a year to finish a 200? No, I'm not suggesting this. We would still need to draw a line, but let's craft one for practical reasons (fairness to ride organizers, and the actual speed of very very slow cyclists) and not our present exclusionary ones.

So where do we draw the line? Well, there is an obvious option, one which would make the limit crystal clear to riders and brevet organizers alike, and at all times on the course... Base the slow-end limit on 10 km/hour - no calculations necessary ever, and look at the beautiful symmetry:

- ◆ 200 km: 20 hours
- ◆ 300 km: 30 hours
- ◆ 400 km: 40 hours
- ◆ 600 km: 60 hours
- ◆ 1000 km: 100 hours
- ◆ 1200 km: 120 hours

It would be nice to eliminate the slow-end time limit completely for controls, making the finishing time the only time that matters...nice, but impractical. Control monitors need to know when they are free to leave. The controls could all be at 24-hour

convenience stores, I suppose, but there would still be the matter of secret controls - there has to be a finite limit on the time a secret control monitor must stick around. So for practical reasons, control time limits will always be necessary, but of course there is no reason why the same relaxed 10 km an hour rule could not apply here too.

Change takes time, and this is not necessarily a bad thing. We can't expect Audax Club Parisien in France to reverse a century of tradition and adopt a change like this overnight. I don't expect BC Randonneurs to adopt this overnight either...but let me dream a little. Here's a thought: we could, as a club, recognize the completion of brevets outside the existing time envelope, and concede that for the time being these particular brevet results will not be forwarded to France. If we were to make the first step, I'm confident that changes which are so obviously good for the sport, would, in time, receive due consideration in France.

So I guess I'm proposing what might seem to some like a dramatic departure from the status quo - throwing our door open to both fast and slow cyclists. Truly though, I don't think we need fear either group - they won't ruin our sport. My suspicion is that they will enrich us with greater diversity, and I think we should welcome them all.

The Deal with Time Limits

Danelle Laidlaw

To popularize our sport or not? This is one of the questions that Eric is raising in his article on time limits. This is not a new question for our club - near the end of its first decade, the club officials were struggling with the question of growth - do we want to put all our time and effort into trying to attract more people to the club? Or do we want to put our resources to work in other ways. The decision then, and now, was not to try and replicate the services of other clubs, but to maintain a focus. And that focus, the development of long distance, timed events, is governed by a host of rules developed internationally.

Here in BC, we have not taken the elitist approach they have in France. We have opened our doors somewhat by providing shorter distance ride and relaxing time limits on these rides to encourage people to sample the sport. And we get a good turn out for those events. And some of the people who ride the shorter rides, end up doing longer ones - great! But why do they do the longer rides - because there is a challenge involved - not only of going that distance, but also, of doing so within a time limit. That is the motivation. That is the core of our sport.

As an organizer of the Rocky Mountain 1200, I believe that opening up the time limit on this event would kill it. There would be no prestige in doing the event if it didn't conform to the international standard (despite our gorgeous scenery), and to the general public who are overwhelmed by the thought of doing that kind of distance - the difference between having almost 4 days to complete and having 5 days to do the event is immaterial.

If you have ever spent any time trying to promote the idea of doing randonnees, then you will know that what catches the imagination of those who eventually become involved in the club is the challenge of being able to do something which seems impossible at first thought. It certainly isn't the prestige (who knows?), or the rewards (a pin?).

Our club is very special. We have lots of dedicated volunteers and many of those volunteers get out and help because they know what it feels like the first time you break through what you thought was a physical limit. They want to assist others to do that. I also think that is one of the reasons that we have been searching for harder and harder routes - we are constantly trying to push the limits.

On the other end of the scale - it is true that there is no upper time limit at Paris-Brest-Paris. But, to the best of my knowledge, the only event where the fast time limit is an issue for us in BC is the Flatlander. And maybe all that means is that we have the first control too soon. If 5 people are inconvenienced by this, by all means, let's move the first control so that they will not be cooling their heels for 5 or 6 minutes waiting for the control to open.

I understand that Tim Pollock is not available to run the Flatlander this year - maybe we have some volunteers to take over that role and change the route to accommodate those fast riders on this flat course! But let's not let this issue get out of proportion.

Randonneuring and Time Limits

Kent Peterson

Eric Fergusson asks "so what's the deal with these time limits anyway?" and goes on to make a case suggesting more relaxed limits. Danelle Laidlaw presents her views on keeping the existing limits. I'm not a member of the BC Randonneurs, but I am a member of RUSA and the Seattle International Randonneurs and when I read these two articles, I felt compelled to respond. I am not in favor of changing any of the time limits and in this article, I'll outline my reasons for this.

Eric begins his article with the contention that the time limits exist primarily for "practical management of the controls" and describes how he offers the encouraging words to new riders that "It's unlikely that you or I will be outside the time envelope no matter how fast or slow we are riding."

I question the premise behind both of these statements. From my perspective, the time limits exist because they are an integral part of the challenge of randonneuring. The challenge is not "ride 200k". It is "ride 200k, on this course, on this date, hitting these checkpoints within these time limits". This is never a gimme. There is always a possibility of failure. That is the challenge.

Our sport is somewhat unique in that it does not draw a big distinction between the first finisher of an event and the last. It does, as Eric notes, value the determination and effort of each rider. But that determination is measured against a scale. And that scale is marked by geography, weather, circumstance and time. And whenever you have a scale, there will be some people who fail to meet the scale. And I think that possibility of failure is, at least for some of us, a prime motivator.

Eric says that we are discriminating against cyclists on the basis of speed and that this discrimination "indirectly runs deeper - our age, sex, whether we have a disability, and whether we can afford a fast bike, are all factors affecting our cycling speed." Somehow, it seems, we should only measure effort and determination.

I believe that our current system accurately measures effort and determination. However, the measure that is taken in our brevets is not only a measure of that brevet, it is a measure of what

has brought the rider to the brevet. That is, the long hours ridden on dark and rainy roads, the miles and hours spent learning to work the body and the bike, the countless challenges met and mastered.

Is our current scale too harsh, too exclusionary? What about the old or those with disabilities? Perhaps we should ask Jack Eason (75 years old), or Van Epps (who I last saw hand-cranking his way on the 1999 PBP). And even though Jack and Van have had their share of victories over circumstance, they've had times when circumstance was the victor. But that is the fuel, the secret of eventual victory. It's not about Gu or titanium bikes. It's about determination. I don't think Jack or Van would want you to change the scale for them.

But they are extraordinary men, you might say. And I would counter that they are extraordinary because they've pushed against limits. And athletic events, including randonneuring, are about goals, determination and surpassing limits. The limits exist to strengthen us, make us better even as we chafe against them.

Would it hurt to lower the bar? Wouldn't we gain a wider field if we opened things up more? I think Danelle makes a good point when she questions what actual gain in numbers an expanded time range would give but I also think it's important to note that changing the limit would diminish what it means to finish. The value of a medal comes not from its shine, but the effort put into its acquisition. Lowering the bar diminishes the effort needed and thus diminishes what we mean when we say we are randonneurs. Is this elitist? Yes, we are an elite group in the true sense of the word. We are separated from most of the world by what we have willed ourselves to do.

So far, I've not mentioned the fast riders, the ones who chafe at the other end of the time limit. Eric feels that pointing out they can get racing licenses is dismissive of his concern. But I think this is a valid point.

The very fast do have avenues to pursue their need for speed. There is an active ultra-cycling community and as Eric noted, in PBP there is no fast limit. But just as the low-speed cut-off defines randonneuring as being something different from touring, the high-speed cut-off differentiates randonneuring from racing.

The existing time limits do have the weight of history behind them and with that comes the world-wide fraternity of randonneurs. A brevet series done in Russia or Australia or Wisconsin has the same value since we are measured against a common scale. I do not feel that scale should be changed lightly. It is not a scale that exists because of a blind adherence to tradition. It is a scale that exists because for a vast majority of randonneurs, it accurately measures true effort and determination.

Post Fleche Adventure – exciting new rides in Merritt

John Bates

You've given your pound of fleche, now come and enjoy an exciting new ride on the following weekend in the vicinity of Merritt, just 3 ½ hr by car from the big smoke. Two scintillating new randonnee routes of 200 km and 300 km will be staged on Saturday, May 26th. The routes follow some of the less travelled highways in the province and include one of the most thrilling descents – oh yeah, you have to earn it. Route descriptions and

profiles can be previewed on the club web site <http://www.randonneurs.bc.ca>. For those that want to max out the weekend, an unofficial but beautiful off-road ride in the surrounding grasslands will be held on Sunday, May 27th. Contact John Bates (604-528-2081) for details.

John Hathaway Memorial Ride

David Poon

John Hathaway Memorial Ride is on May 27th, 2001 starting at 9 am at the Trout Lake southeast concession. For registration information, please contact Mark Fearn at 733-3964. This is a Vancouver Bicycle Club Ride.

New cycling clothing to look spiffy in...

Danelle Laidlaw

Hey, the Canadian jerseys are back and we have new shorts in stock – so don't delay – get outfitted now. All sizes – Jerseys are \$65 and Shorts are \$50.

I also have a few pairs of tights in XL and XXL (\$50), a couple of BC Jerseys in S (\$65), and gloves in L and XXS (\$17).

Clothing can be purchased anytime from Danelle by calling 737-0043, or toll-free 1-877-606-BIKE.

Ride Report - 2001-February-25

Harold Bridge

Back in Pioneer Days the advice given to the up and coming was: "Go West Young Man". But I don't consider myself young anymore and when it comes to going for a club ride from Fort Langley I prefer: "Go East Old Man!"

However, dedicated Club members that we are we went along with Madam Prez (what else is new?) when she stated we were to reconnoiter Dan McGuire's proposed 50 km route for April 22 "Short Rides". It was to head southwest. I had a camera with me and I suggested a photo of us in front of Wendell's. I was about to click when a lady wound down the window of her car and suggested she take the pic so we could all be in it. What a nice gesture! I have done that sort of thing for people but I've never got out my car to do so.

Allard Crescent et al to the new Surrey Sports and Recreation Facility on Fraser Hwy at 165 St wasn't too bad. Everyone congregated there in the relatively warm sunshine that counteracted the chilly wind and we set off west more or less altogether, for a while. That time of day (11:00) is not good cycling time on Fraser Hwy & 88th Ave and I wondered if we should have discussed the potential casualty rate before setting out into Darkest Surrey. Even having the ex-mayor of Surrey with us was little consolation, with the disguise he was wearing no one recognized him! However, as it transpired, all eight of us, John Bates and Danelle Laidlaw on't tandem, Lyle Beaulac, David Blanche, Bobs Bose & Marsh, Gerry Nicol & your scribe all crossed Scott Road into the relative safety of Delta.

With good timing the elderly member of the group was able to jump onto the wheel of the tandem as it rocketed by and steal a few kilometers of brisk, 30ish, riding toward Ladner. Some quiet lanes through a flat pastoral landscape brought forth a comment from

Gerry about how flat it was. He hasn't been exposed to such leniency on previous club rides!

We nearly settled for Ladner's Rickeys for lunch when Lyle apprised us the existence of a pub not a block away. A quick turn around and the use of several padlocks to secure about \$30,000 of hardware and we enjoyed a lunch in the Ladner Landing. Madam Prez stated there was still some of the route to detail. A slightly rebellious elder faction decided that was an opportunity to get a few kilometers in the bank.

Once we had found Gerry we headed east on #10 and it's hill up to Scott Road. By that time the idea of being a moving side show to a constant stream of traffic was becoming a bit stale and it was suggested a bit of "Rose Sniffing" time was required off to the side along Panorama Ridge. Here we admired the view down over the flats to Boundary Bay in the light of a lowering sun. In the meantime Gerry was adding some air pressure to his rear tyre. Once over King George Highway Bob suggested we avoid that dreadful stretch of Hwy 10 into Cloverdale and we turned onto 148th St and by a series of zig-zags got onto Hwy 15 north of Cloverdale.

Saw one time randonneur George Siudut going the other way and when we stopped on Harvie Road to deal with Gerry's ailing rear tube George joined us. It just remained for us to get to 96th Av. where George turned west and we turned east to Fort Langley. Got a toot from the Bates van as it took Madam Prez to the Sky Train (the penalty for living in an out of the way place like Vancouver). The others were still at Wendall's enjoying a beautiful late afternoon and it was at least half an hour before we made a move for home at something past 17:00.

A good day out; 103 km with less than 5 hr riding time. Left at about 09:30 and got back about 16:30, a 7 hour day. Not bad.

Rando Social

Ian Stephen

This year's Spring Social, held at the Croatian Cultural Centre, made a fun and informative evening. The attendance figure we arrived at through the phone-around matched the estimate arrived at by past years attendance and current club membership. The seats were booked and by my count we were only off by 3! Thanks everyone who helped with that.

Roger Street and Cheryl Lynch were on hand early to staff the door, collecting the wee entry fee and applying gentle(?) pressure on all to take the opportunity to renew their memberships. When Roger announced that last year's memberships had expired about half an hour ago, I was waiting for him to say "so pay-up or get out!", but he was too much the gentleman.

The evening was competently MC'ed by Past Pres Doug Latonnell, fresh from his starring appearance at the VBC/VACC touring seminar. After some introductions and kudos, Doug drew attention to some excellent charts of club stats over the years that had been provided by our Data Queen Cheryl. More club history was provided by Karen Smith in the form of a great display of brevet pins going back into the 1980's. There were even a few ACP brevet pins, which Eric told me are often found in other regions. Apparently many clubs don't do their own pins, instead receiving theirs from France and awarding them at their spring socials! I don't think I'd make it sometimes if it weren't for the pin waiting at

the finish! The pin display was ingeniously hung on the fireplace by me. Feel free to heap praise next time you see me!

The floor was turned over to Randonneurs Mondiaux president Réal Préfontaine. Réal continued the 'over the years' theme with a fascinating history of the PBP and the origins and relationship of the Audax Club Parisienne and Randonneurs Mondiaux. Sprinkled with gems like the first woman, first tandem, first pneumatic tire and an oscillating saddle as well as the achievements of some amazing early riders, Réal's talk was a highlight of the evening.

Susan Allen followed with a brief bit on the newsletter and an impassioned plea for members to take the newsletter electronically. I do so I can be smug now.

John Bates took the floor next, supplementing the huge map he had posted with descriptions of the events scheduled this year. Even with his laid-back speaking style I found John's talk thrilling. It has been too long since I've rode in the mountains. 2001 is going to be an exciting year! Bob Boonstra also stepped up to talk a bit about the interior routes. The 300 from Revelstoke Dam to Mica Dam caught my attention when Bob promised no traffic on this route as it's a dead-end highway! John closed his talk with the first award presentation of the evening. The Support-Slut award went to Bob Marsh, who in his own words 'will stop anywhere and pick up anyone!' Even if the randonneur doesn't need assistance it is comforting to see a friendly face when misfortune strikes in the middle of nowhere.

Sharon Street and Danelle Laidlaw were up next to assure everyone that the Pacific Populaire is all set to be a grand event again this year. If I remember correctly, Danelle even said that Eric Fergusson had passed on the secret of ensuring good weather for the event.

Keith Nichol stepped up to speak about this year's Fleche, being organized by he and Cheryl. The brochure says something about teams competing for the most distance in this event. With the record held by Ted Milner, Ken Bonner and Keith Fraser of 654 km in 24 hours I found myself looking at the brochure today thinking we need to remove the word "competing".

Harold Bridge spoke of his Canada Day Populaire, a fine idea that he is organizing for us again this year. Harold also spoke on the upcoming LEL, which fortunately will not be cancelled in spite of the terrible hoof-and-mouth outbreak. For those attending LEL, I'll pass on a tip I got from the paper today. Dry-clean your clothes and disinfect your shoes before you return home. Once home, stay away from farm animals for two to four weeks. I know this may mean some lonely farm animals, but it's for their own good. Harold is also organizing some 'nested' brevets this year and paid us the compliment of saying that while the ACP has a problem with this sort of thing, it will be fine here because we are all such an honourable bunch. Thanks Harold.

Bob Marsh returned to the floor next to give thanks for those helping with the short ride series. Having seen the reactions of people at the Touring Seminar to the RM1200 map, I am more convinced than ever that the short ride series is an important aspect of our club (I swear the fact that I received a lovely short ride series medal had nothing to do with this opinion!). I think it would be beneficial to make these rides more prominent if we are invited to a second touring seminar.

The awarding of the Randonneur 500 and 1000 medals by Bob

kicked off a long sequence of award awarding. A fact that arose during this that needs repeating is that of 102 Super 5000 awards earned in 1999 and 2000, BC Randonneurs earned 27! I felt vicariously awesome upon hearing that. Good for us!

Danelle made mention of club clothes. I think this was the briefest presentation of the evening. As I recall it went something like "I have clothes. Buy now or call me later." Spurred by the power of her speech, I bought now. She will also have clothes available at the Populaire, where I'm sure I'll fall victim to her sales skill again. I need some shorts.

Marion Orser, a past director of the VACC, spoke of some of the accomplishments of the VACC in the area of cycling advocacy as well as giving us a better understanding of the methods and philosophy of the organization. Marion also pointed out that the room was graced with the presence of two current VACC directors, Chrystal Dalcyce and Brian George. While I believe that the club prefers to remain non-political, I personally encourage all cyclists to join and support the VACC.

After the talking was over, Harold and Dan McGuire entertained us with slides. Harold demonstrated amazing powers of recall, naming nearly every rider featured in the slides and throwing in interesting facts to go with the pictures. Dan's slides included some of his trip across Canada and ended with some delightful slides from Cuba which in Dan's words 'demonstrate the utility of the bicycle.'

The evening closed with a fabulous assortment of door prizes. I didn't keep count, but it seemed there were almost enough for everyone to come away with something. Even the bartender won a prize! There were smiles all around during this part of the evening. If you happen to see any of our benefactors, please be sure to express our gratitude for the loot they provided.

Bicycle Touring Seminar a Tremendous Success

Ian Stephen

The BC Randonneur Cycling Club enjoyed the privilege of participating in the Bicycle Touring Seminar hosted by the Vancouver Bicycle Club and Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition on March 24.

Cyclists of all sorts filled the Vancouver Racquets Club, no doubt drawn by Maureen Mol's appearance as capable and fashionable poster girl for the event. Once inside, those attending were treated to a wide range of displays on cycling advocacy, tours to suit all kinds be they bold, meek, roadie or mud-lover, and of course our own display for those who might like to tour in hours what others cover in days. Presentations were carried on throughout the day, including one by our own Susan Allen and Doug Latornell on how to cycle-camp with efficiency and comfort.

The Randonneur table was a valuable contribution to the event thanks to the efforts of Bob Marsh, Danelle Laidlaw, Karen Smith and Ian Stephen. The club may see some new members this year due to Bob's infectious passion for the sport. Most who wandered within the radius of his energy were inspired to try distances they hadn't dared before.

BC Randonneurs is grateful to the organizers, whose hard work paid off in a first rate event. It was an excellent opportunity

to promote our sport to a receptive audience.

A Social Thank You

Danelle Laidlaw

Well, another year has been officially launched by the annual Social. This year, it was held in the Croatian Cultural Centre on Commercial at 16th. Our cozy room was just the right size for a bit of talking, a bit of drinking, a bit of eating, a bit of congratulations to those receiving medals, a bit of slides shown, a bit of history - and lots of prizes.

I would like to thank Karen Smith for finding the venue; Ian Stephens for co-ordinating the event; Doug Latornell for being the MC; Roger Street and Cheryl Lynch for handling the door and memberships; John Bates, Cheryl and Karen for providing displays; Keith Fletcher, John Bates, Ian Stephen, and Doug Latornell for getting the door prizes; Real Prefontaine, Marion Orser, Harold Bridge and Dan McGuire for providing the entertainment; all those who helped phone round; and all those who came out. It was a great start to what is going to be a great season.

les Randonneurs Mondiaux President's Letter # 4 March, 2001

Réal Prefontaine, President

Welcome to the first year of the new millennium and another active year for les Randonneurs Mondiaux. In 2000, two hundred and twelve randonneurs from 12 different countries completed a brevet of 1200 km or more. From the list of events scheduled for this year, this number will certainly be surpassed.

A.- les Randonneurs Mondiaux structure

In previous Letters mention was made of the objective to consolidate our various directives and governing rules in one document. The project is well underway and on schedule for completion of a working document by the end of 2001.

B.- les Randonneurs Mondiaux Jersey

This endeavor is directed by Don Briggs, the Vice President. Financial problems have delayed the project. Information on the cost and means of procurement are unfortunately not yet available. Alternate sources of financing are being explored.

C.- International Super Randonneurs

Introduced in 1991, the ISR encourages randonneurs to participate in events in other than those in their own country. This program is coordinated by the Audax United Kingdom. Twenty-one randonneurs have now merited this award. For more information contact Sheila Simpson, 33 Hawk Green Road, Marple SK6 7HR, Britain. [Sheila@aukhawk.demon.co.uk]

D.- News from members

Australia

By the time the March President's Letter is received, the Audax Australia (Melbourne) will have sponsored not only a 1200 km brevet, but also a 2001 km in 2001. Can we foresee a 2002 km in 2002?

Bulgaria

A full series of Brevet Randonneurs Mondiaux is scheduled. In addition, with the endorsement of the Bulgaria Tourist Federation, plans have been formulated for a 1200 km in 2001, from the capital of Sofia, to Varna on the Black Sea and return.

Canada

The British Columbia Randonneurs Cycling Club has established communications with Star Bike Japan to assist this country in organizing randonneur cycling in Japan.

Germany

The Audax Randonneur Allemagne have formalized an operational model for randonneurs activities all Germany. A brevet coordinator has been identified in each of the seven regions now organizing Brevet Randonneurs Mondiaux.

Japan

Although not yet an Associate Member of les Randonneurs Mondiaux, Japan has an active group of cyclists in the process of developing randonneur cycling. Their enthusiasm is supported by the organization Star Bike Japan and by the editor of "Cycle Sports" magazine, Shinobu Miyauchi. Cycle Sports is also the sponsor of the Can-Am Challenge pin. The Can-Am Challenge was introduced in 2000, to recognize randonneurs who complete, in the same year, the Rocky Mountain 1200 km and the Boston Montreal Boston 1200 km. Eleven randonneurs from five different countries have now achieved this objective. Can we foresee Japanese randonneurs participating in these events in 2002?

Russia

"Around Ladoga Lake" June 22-23, 2001. The 1000 km brevet mentioned in the October Letter will not materialize, but a 600 km, with the option of extending the ride to 800 km is confirmed. More information is available from Andrey Hnannolainen (postal address: + ul. S.Kovalsevskoy 10-4-64, 195256 St. Petersburg, Russia. Telephone +7 (812) 328-3142. E-mail randonneurspb@mail.ru)

United States

American Randonneurs are enjoying a renaissance of randonneur cycling. Randonneurs USA (RUSA) continues to grow, having more than 1100 members. Over 143 events are scheduled for 2001. For the first time in the history of les RM, one country will host three 1200 km events in the same year, all three sanctioned by les Randonneurs Mondiaux. Each event promises terrific scenery, challenging climbs and excellent organization! Ride one, or go for 'the hat trick' and ride all three!

Les Randonneurs Mondiaux calendar for 2001

- ◆ 1.- Audax Australia, March 9 - 16, 2001 Riders have the choice of a 1000 km, a 1200 km or a 2001 km brevets. Contact: Alan Tonkin: [alantonkin@one.net.au] [www.audax.org.au]
- ◆ 2.- Sofia-Varna-Sofia'2001: (Cycling Club "Sinite kamani" Sliven, Bulgaria) June 21-24, 2001 Contact: Lazar Vladislavov, 2-B-15 Irechek, Silven 8800, Bulgaria Tele.: / Fax: ++359 44 37395 [lazar.v@lycos.com]
- ◆ 3.- Super Brevets Scandinavia, July 21 - 25, 2001 Contact:

Johannes Kristiansen, Lynge Bygade 17, DK-3540 Lynge, Denmark Tele.: +45 48 18 77 71

[johannes.kristiansen@teliamail.dk]

- ◆ 4.- London-Edinburgh-London, July 21 - 25, 2001 Contact: Bernard Mawson, 64 Arklow Road, Intake, Doncaster, DN2 5LD, Britain [Bernie@powerhouse64.freemove.co.uk]
- ◆ 5.- Gold Rush Randonnée (Davis Bike Club, California, USA), July 9 - 13, 2001 Contact: Daryn Dodge, 2618 Kline Ct., Davis, CA 95616, USA Tele.: 530 756-0186 [DDODGE@oehha.ca.gov>] [http://davisbikeclub.org/goldrush]
- ◆ 6.- Boston Montreal Boston (Massachusetts, USA) August 16 - 19, 2001 Contact: Jennifer Wise, 10 Bliss Mine Road, Middletown, RI 02840, USA Tele.: 401 847-1715 [wise@edgenet.net] [www.bmb1200k.com]
- ◆ 7.- Colorado 1200 km Randonnée (Rocky Mountain Cycling Club, Col, USA) Sept. 7 - 10, 2001 Contact: John Lee Ellis, 2155 Dogwood Circle, Louisville, CO 80027, USA [jellisx7@juno.com] [www.rmccrides.com/brevet1L.htm]

Nanaimo Populaire Results

Mike Poplawski

Congratulations to all the riders in today's Nanaimo Populaire. 18 entries, 18 finishers. You were a great group--thanks for arriving on time and hanging around for stories at the finish! The new start/finish location and the revised route were big hits as well; thank you, Stephen Hinde, for updating the cue sheet.

100 km Nanaimo Populaire

Shortest time: 4:08; Longest Time: 6:45; Average Time: 5:40

- ◆ Michael Ball 5:03
- ◆ Keith Brown 5:57
- ◆ Allan Dunlop 4:55
- ◆ Rob Fraser 4:25
- ◆ Lyse Godbout 6:44
- ◆ Bob Goerzen 4:55
- ◆ Tom Hocking 6:45
- ◆ Chris Hofstrand 4:08
- ◆ Patsy Hofstrand 5:55
- ◆ James Holtz 5:26
- ◆ Deborah Keith 6:44
- ◆ Jim Kirby 5:55
- ◆ Taryn Langford 6:45
- ◆ Marianne McGrath 5:26
- ◆ Stella Meades 6:10
- ◆ Joanne Metz 4:41
- ◆ Linda Saunders 5:26
- ◆ Kevin Strong 6:45

A sincere thanks again to the people who helped promote and assist the event, including and not limited to Roy, Wanda, Marg, Janice and Karina.

I hope I see you all again at the first Island Brevet on April 14 (200 km tour of the Cowichan Valley). Contact Stephen Hinde at randos@island.net to inquire about riding the 200 km brevet or a shorter distance.