

Randonneur

Marathon Cycling



Contacts

President.
Danelle Laidlaw 604-732-0212

Vice-President
Gary Baker

Secretary
Ali Holt 604-946-8438

Treasurer
Alex Pope

Past President
Lyle Beaulac 604-524-1384

Newsletter Editor
Scott Gater 604-244-7234

Social Coordinator
Karen Smith 604-732-0212

Web Guy
Eric Fergusson 604-733-6657

Brochure

Awards Coordinator
Karen Smith 604-732-0212

*Lower Mainland Route
Coordinator*
Michel Richard 604-739-6798

Mid-Island Route Coordinator

Interior Route Coordinator
Bob Boonstra 250-828-2869

Peace Region Route Coordinator
Wim Kok 250-785-4589

South Island Route Coordinator
Mike Poplawski 250-882-1239

Clothing
Danelle Laidlaw 604-737-0043

*Database Manage, Randonneur
Mondiaux, Canada Rep.*
Cheryl Lynch Cheryl Lynch



Ed Says

Well, here we are, at the end of another Randonneur season. Fall has now begun and the side streets are clogged once again with fallen leaves and branches from the first of the winter storms that will soon lash the coast, bring snow to the interior and to the mountains. It was a great season this year, lots of new rides in new areas for the club and lots of new faces out there on the rides. In this issue, we'll look back at the stories of the summer ride season with reports from Vancouver Island, the lower Mainland and from the interior. So settle back, get that warm mug of caffeine ready and get ready to re live the summer that was. But before we do that, just a couple announcements

Clothing News

Hey Dudes and Dudettes - since you have all had a really great rando season and just pedalled your little buns off, time to stock up on some new clothing - we have everything - jackets, gloves, jerseys, shorts, and socks and lots of sizes. Call Danelle to make arrangements - 604 737-0043

Wanted:

Designs for the 2006 Brevet Series pin

Design should include: "2006", "BC Randonneurs" and a place for the distance (200 km).

Please send designs to Karen Smith by Dec 15, 2005 at ksmith222@telus.net or fax to 604-264-2432 attention Karen. Or call Karen at 604-732-0212.

Elephant for Breakfast, Elephant for Lunch...

by Ron Penner

Anticipation

Since becoming interested in brevet distances only a few years ago, I've collected advice from anyone who offered (between experienced riders and the website, there is no shortage). A 200 km ride struck me as impossible for normal human beings, but I kept meeting riders who had finished a 200 or more, and they seemed (relatively) normal. Finally, last year I tried a couple of 200's, the Spring LM, at a good clip, and the Fall Flatlander, with Laura, at a more leisurely pace. The obvious (and impossible seeming) "next step" was a full series. (NOTE: in keeping with the Tao of Rando-ism, I will not mention the times on these rides - also I think we're somewhere between average and slow, so the less said the better.)

Last fall, (as the *good advice* suggested), I started telling anyone who would listen that I would attempt the whole spring series, and surprisingly, Laura told me that she was interested in joining

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me. I think I became a bit insufferable on the subject. Then came a whole winter of commuting in the wet and dark, watching the website to see routes as they were announced, even bugging route organizers. They tolerated my enthusiasm as well as Laura did. In late February the weekend rides started. In March we slowly increased distances. Finally, the season started.

April 3 - Pacific Populaire: 100 km

We had geared up for rain during the previous week, and this was a perfect test for that gear. It poured for the first 85 km, the wind howled, we got soaked and figured out what did and did not work. Also, we told ourselves that we had experienced the worst weather early. The brevets would not be as bad as this. Nothing could be as bad as...

April 16 - LM Spring 200

We were among 58 riders gathered in the damp morning gloom at Albion Hall and shuffled off together onto the rainy eastward roads. By the first control (90 km) we were soaked, but thanks to modern material science, not cold. Standing around for 10 minutes eating a bagel solved that "problem" and we shivered off into the rain.

The next stage involved crossing the Rosedale bridge, a hair-raising experience at the best of times. Somewhat numb from the cold southeasterly, we hit the Yellow Barn, still in relatively good spirits. Inhaled a nuked Samosa, a bag of chips and some iced tea. Refreshed, but once again chilled, we hopped on our bikes and trundled off in the direction of Zero Avenue. This was our slowest part of the ride. Near the end of this stage we noticed the rain had stopped. 175 km of it - finally at an end. That made the final control a very pleasant one. But wait, there are black clouds over Aldergrove...

The folks who pulled in 10 minutes before us had hail from those clouds; we got nothing as it turned out. My only concern on finishing was the pain and stiffness in my right knee. I rode from

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 four times per year. 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.

Editor: Scott Gater

Submissions: Please send articles to our webmaster Eric Fergusson. My preference is plain text files or Word and digital photos in JPEG format to eric_fergusson@telus.net.

Next publication deadline is Jan 15/06.

the pub to the car with that leg hooked over the saddle bag, pretty much unusable. What would it do on a 300? Hopefully it was the cold?

April 30 - LM Spring 300

Our first 300, our first cross border brevet, lots of firsts. This time we were 66 riders at 6:00 am in Delta heading off into the gloomy morning (no downpour, good). My left knee stiffened a bit at 70 km. I noticed I was compensating by overworking the right knee. Memories of the 200 told me this was a bad plan, so I geared down some more and tried to spin evenly. It turned out this worked, because the knees were not a problem after this.

84 km to the first control breezed by with some light drizzle. It seemed that a number of the people who introduced themselves were also doing their first 300. An Egg McMuffin and a large OJ refilled the belly in Bellingham and we were off again. The next 57 km were equally pleasant, a bit dryer, and we arrived at Hamilton in sunshine. Had a great lunch there, with the locals providing the colour. Small town life...

We left there with heavy legs, thinking that the next 80 km stage would take us beyond our longest day ever. This seems to be the pattern with us: the second last stage is the toughest. Refueling at the "Super Duper Food Store" in Sumas was timely, as I was very low on fluids at that point. We were warned by other riders at this control that there were still some hills coming.

They were right! The last 82 km started with incessant rollers along the border as we headed back west toward the Peace Arch crossing. Then came the climb up 168th St. and, joy of joys, the ensuing downhill toward 32nd Ave (86.6 kph, don't tell my mother). Shortly after that, the sun set, and we finished the last 30 km (?) in the dark. As I thought, a 300 feels like a long 200. More of everything, except, luckily, knee pain.

May 20, 21 - LM Spring 400

Who knew that there were so many Dewdney Trunk Roads in the Fraser Valley. You see a sign with the right name about 1.5 km before it should arrive. It's a new route, and maybe your odometer isn't calibrated 100%, so you take it. Luckily it only added about 10 km to our total, and that of a few others as well. This one was tough: our first attempt at breaking the sleep barrier combined with what more experienced riders politely called a challenging route.

The route was described as hills, then flat, then more hills, then more flat. The first set of hills was an endless chain of big rollers, scrambling around completely empty roads north of the Lougheed toward Stave Lake. We went through some really beautiful country and ended the stage with cookies, a theme that would continue through all the volunteer-occupied controls. There was a nice descent back down to the Lougheed, then we went over Woodside and out to Harrison for a self-control in a restaurant whose specialty seemed to be Schnitzel! The route back over toward the Vedder area was also quite flat. The second climbing section involved humping our way up to Chilliwack Lake (some of that climb was easy, but there was a section of 13% as well). We descended from that in the gathering gloom, and immediately climbed up to the Columbia Valley (more sections of 13%). Our descent from there occurred in darkness and rain. We were now

close to the 300 km mark and Laura was having trouble keeping her eyes open. We had been back and forth a bit with Ron Himschoot and Ali Holt, and they started sticking with us at this point to keep an eye on our progress (very nice). Finally, at Whatcom Road, we headed over to the Tim Horton's. It was hoped a cup of coffee and a donut would prop our eyelids open. Ron and Ali went on alone at our insistence.

The coffee did not do the trick for Laura and about 20 minutes later I left the Tim Horton's alone, with a promise to drive back and pick Laura up (not sure about the wisdom of promising to drive for an hour after riding 400 km). I was still doing OK, so I worked up a bit of speed to catch Ron and Ali. I managed that at the next control where they were just finishing a meal. I grabbed a croissant and refilled an empty bottle with iced tea, hit the washroom and left with them. They were amazing to watch, joking back and forth to keep each other awake. The jokes were mostly groaners, or maybe we were all just groaning for our own reasons. I was not much help in this department, basically hanging on in their general company to keep myself awake. In Maple Ridge I started running over debris on the roadside (it was not a lighting issue, but a brain responding issue). Eventually one piece was big enough to flatten my front tire. After some initial fumbling, my fingers started working again and I fixed it, pumped it up and we continued.

Rolling into the Knight and Day near dawn was very sweet, but victory was short-lived. After dropping off the control card and exchanging congratulations it was time to head off east in the car! I have to say that I did not stay in my lane the whole way out to Abbotsford, and needed every trick I could think of to stay awake. Luckily, Laura had managed a couple hours of sleep, so she was capable of driving home. (Laura wants to amend the DNF in August, perhaps I'll join her. She was in good company in the DNF group: 30 riders started the 400, 25 finished.)

June 4, 5 - LM Spring 600

With Laura not joining me, I was suddenly faced with the daunting task of setting my own pace, riding my own ride, etc. This was a challenge I looked forward to, perhaps too much. The group gets noticeably smaller as you get into the longer distances. 20 riders started out from Maple Ridge in cool temperatures and light cloud cover (perfect). I started with a good group going a very comfortable pace. Then my front tire blew. The group continued without me, after all, it's early, and it's only a flat. When

I pulled over I realized that it was a blowout of the sidewall (the result of running into that debris on the 400, probably). Luckily, I was able to patch this up and continue, knowing that I had a new tire waiting for me in Spence's Bridge. I had more or less caught the back of the crowd at the first control at Whatcom Road.

The next stage to Dogwood Café fairly flew by, thanks to a friendly tailwind. The climb up to Lake of the Woods is really not that bad. I pulled into the café, grabbed a soup and sandwich, refilled fluids and took off with Ron Himschoot.

Riding with Ron was great, we talked to pass the time, but suddenly I got it into my head that I wanted to make better time. My success on this ride, I figured, depended on getting to Spence's Bridge (2nd time) as early as possible - to maximize sleep time. So, when I looked back at the top of a hill and noticed that I had opened a gap, and at the top of the next hill the gap was a bit bigger, decided to ride on alone.

I have a list of 7 pieces of advice to bicycle racers posted on my cubicle wall at work (from the early days of bicycle racing, apparently). Rule 7 is "Never pedal out of vanity." I think my desire was to finish this one with full credit. It is great that the more experienced riders notice the newer, slower riders and escort them home (some day I will feel confident enough in my basic ability to finish a ride to do this as well), but there comes a time when you think you should rise above this and do it for yourself. Like I said, vanity. I got into Spence's Bridge (1st time) ahead of schedule. The plan was definitely working. I checked into the motel, and installed the new tire. There were few facilities in Spence's Bridge, so I decided to try a can of strawberry Boost and cheese bagel combo as supper. I wolfed them down, figuring I could drink on the bike, and headed off again. That was a mistake. My stomach felt lousy all the way up to Cache Creek, and I only sipped a bit at the fluids.

At the A&W in Cache Creek, I still had an upset stomach. I didn't feel like eating, but knew I was low on fluids, so I just had a large drink and took off. There was snack food on the bike and I wanted to minimize my night riding. As it turns out, root beer does not sooth the savage stomach, and I finally started paying for the pace I had set to that point. It was a long slow ride back to the motel into a headwind. I kept going by telling myself over and over that it is only 47 km, I should be able to do this in my sleep! Which is pretty much what I was

Coming Events

New Years Day Populaire
Jan 1/06 in Victoria-10am
Mike Poplawski 882-1239

Spring Social
March 18/06-7pm
Michel Richard 739-6798

Naniamo Populaire
March 26- 10 am

Pacific Populaire
Reily Park- 9am
Danell Laidlaw

Island 200-
April 8- 7am Chemanius
Susan Allen 734-2504

LM 200
April 15- 7 am
TBA

Peace 25, 50
April 8
Wim Kolk 250-785-4589

Pease 50, 100
April 15
Wim Kolk 250-785-4589

Island 300
April 22-6am
Mike Poplawski 882-1239

Interior 200
April 22- time TBA
Richard Blair 250-372-1873

Peace 100, 150
April 22
WimKolk 250-785-4589

doing at that point.

Pulled into the Spence's Bridge control at around midnight, still ahead of schedule, but feeling completely wasted. I arranged my bags and clothes in preparation for the morning departure and managed a quick shower before dropping into bed. No wakeup call, no alarm clock (I don't wear a watch either). I figured I would let my body decide. If I woke up in time to get on with the ride I would. If not, oh well...

At about 4:00 am, my eyes opened. I felt quite a bit better, checked the limbs, yes they were still capable of movement - good - put on my cycling gear, had another can of Boost (mocha, no bagel) and rolled out of the control to the sounds of coffee pots in the other motel rooms. The headwind was still there, but not too bad. I had a proper sit-down greasy-spoon breakfast in Boston Bar, expecting other riders to come rolling by, but did not see any. I was not particularly fast on this stage, but did keep moving. It started raining at Hell's Gate. I could not get my jacket to zip shut, and it took me a while to figure out that a tiny pebble had jammed itself in the clasp. Pulled out my tools and looked for something narrow and sharp enough to dig it out of there. Good thing, too, because the rain stuck around until Mission! Ali Holt was waiting at the Dogwood Café, offering encouragement, as I downed a well-timed bowl of Chicken Noodle Soup (for the soul AND the body in this particular instance).

Ali warned me that the winds would get worse before they got better. A car driver talked to me as I was loading fresh fluids onto the bike. When I told him I was headed west he said the rain would get worse before it got better. They were both right. I also had real trouble keeping my head up at this point. My neck was not interested in doing its job. Ali had suggested that I stop in Mission at the Tim Horton's for more soup. When I arrived there, and really did feel like stopping, I discovered that she was waiting there as well. Way beyond the call of duty! This time I went for hot chocolate and a donut. Enough sugar and caffeine to push me into Maple Ridge. The wind and rain had stopped, so I pulled on the dry gloves I had been saving for this occasion and cruised into the finish.

I think everyone noticed the stiff neck when I rolled into Bob and Patti Marsh's place. A hot shower, salty snacks, including home made fries, and a beer were definitely therapeutic, but by the time Laura drove up to pick me up I was already starting to fade.

Lessons Learned

Every increase in distance seemed to bring its own lessons. We learned something about rain, and basic perseverance in bad conditions on the 200 and that experience gave us confidence to continue when weather went bad on later rides. We discovered riding in the dark on the 300, and learned that an extra light was needed to read the route sheet and odometer (who knew?). We touched the limits of sleep deprivation on the 400, started thinking about the proper and well timed use of caffeine, sugar and good company at such moments. All of that experience was necessary in order to finish the 600.

Randonneur volunteers are an amazing lot. Staying awake on the bike is one thing, the demands of the road give you something to focus on. Sitting at a control is completely different. As the rides

get longer, the time a control is open gaps wider and wider, and somebody has to stick around from Ken Bonner's arrival to the time that the last of us show up. For this reason, I must end this account with a special thanks to everyone who has put effort into this season's rides. From route development (and maintenance), to ride organization, to control sitting, and hosting finish locations, the support was incredible. Beyond that the companionship and encouragement on the road from other riders was also very cool. From this, and from some of the extended diatribes in the discussion group I can sense the passion that you (dare I say 'we' now?) bring to this sport. Very inspiring.

When I think and scheme of future rides, I see that there is still a 1200 km ride waiting for me somewhere, but whatever the next years bring, I will not forget this first attempt at completing a whole series (no matter how hard I try).

TMGGC 2005 Triple Mt Challenge

by Danelle Laidlaw

Conditions - Overcast to start, rain on Seymour - cold, clearing to Cypress, rain at the top of Cypress, clear with sunny periods at the top of Grouse

Jack started at base of Seymour, Scott finished at the base of Cypress, Manfred finished at the parking lot of Grouse, Peter didn't socialize at the top, Susan, Danelle, Jack and John partied at the top.

The climb up Seymour was cloudy, but the rain did not start until we summited and was pretty hard on the way down. A short stop in the coffee shop at Parkgate Mall to warm up had us convinced that this was going to be the double mountain challenge. However, we got to Capilano and decided to continue on to the lookout at Cypress, and lo and behold, we just carried on to the top (well, all but Scott). Jack turned around just short of the top, but he had done most of the climbing (he is a big lad and didn't have enough food with him). We re-grouped at the Grouse Mtn parking lot - Peter had already headed up, Manfred had left for home and although Susan's arm had to be twisted, she agreed to hike the Grind. "A short time later"... we were at the top and enjoyed our beer, nachos and tapas.

Kudos to all who turned out on such an inclement day, particularly Jack who missed his ride with us to the start and still came over to the north shore to join us. Way to go, everyone

Protozoa, Slugs, and Multicellular Life: a double blind study in hallucinatory function on a Vancouver Island tsunami

by Raymond J. Parker

When I signed on to organize the Vancouver Island Summer 200/300 events, I had little idea how much work was involved in establishing a new brevet. I now compare the labours to creating a Squamish rock-climbing route -- minus gardening trowel and wire brush.

Over the weeks, my ever-tolerant wife and navigator, Amanda Jones, accompanied me, clipboard in hand, on mapping jaunts out into the countryside around Victoria. The object was to keep the route, unlike the Spring 300, south of the Malahat. We (including VI route-wranglers Stephen Hinde and Michael Poplawski) knew what this meant: Port Renfrew.

Highway 14, snaking along the west coast from Sooke -- shall we call it an "undulating" road? -- had its brevet debut last year, as part of the Spring Series Island 600, dubbed by Kevin Bruce the "VPPV" - as in Victoria-Port Renfrew-Parksville-Victoria. Or, was it Attack of the Killer Slugs? But I digress.

I'd long been itching (before my enforced retirement from randonneuring, 11 years ago) to create a route that traversed the precipitous, though scenic, Willis Point and Ross-Durrance Roads, linking Saanich and Langford. Here, finally, was the chance to hatch my evil plan. The only question was, whether I'd survive my own wickedness.

The chance to find out came on July 9. With ideas from my Chief Navigator, input and last minute telephone and Internet control card help from Stephen Hinde, I was ready to pre-ride our, ah, creation.

Joining me were two veterans of last year's VPPV (one who survived and one who didn't): Jaye Haworth and Mike Poplawski.

After printing documents and grabbing 4 hours sleep, I arrived at Cook Street Village just before 7AM, where Jaye and Mike were waiting (this was the beginning of a trend).

Days of exploration and measurement passed by in a flash. Soon we were at the anticipated Ross-Durrance traverse, labouring upwards on the narrow strip of Macadam through the forest, as a peloton of racers swooped by in a blur of club colours.

Losing that altitude, in one 5 kilometre decent, we were on toward Sooke; first via a scenic maze of roads, discovered on recent explorations, then on E. Sooke and Gillespie; the latter freefalling into wondrous Roche Cove, swooping over the narrow bridge and winding back out. If you're a veteran of the Spring VI300, you've seen these sights -- that is if you made it through here before dark. So, if you sign up for the "Tsunami" 300, remind yourself: "Ray sent me here, so I could see all this beauty in daylight." Repeat as necessary.

What would a visit to Sooke be without a stop at Mom's Café? I was convinced, on the June VI200, by the restorative powers of Mom's deep dish apple pie, that this was the "your choice" place to pause and refuel for the challenge to come.

Fortified with bacon and eggs, coffee, French toast and other rib sticking fare, we tackled more climbing on Otter Bay road, only to scream back down to sea level at the West Coast Highway intersection. Still, it was worth it for our first expansive view of the open sea and the tip of the Olympic Peninsula.

To return to Kevin Bruce's observations, last year, on Highway 14's abundant and lightning-fast "ill-intentioned, shell-less mollusc," strangely, we noticed that the preponderance of these creatures -- though some sported leopard-skin markings -- were anything but swift. In fact, most of these slimy roadside denizens were ex-opisthobranchs. You know the routine: deceased, escargot-mort, pining for la forêt de pluie, metabolic processes consigned to history . . . DOA.

Their gooey remains, Jaye and I commiserated later, did not evoke similar epicurean ruminations as their cousins in the French countryside.

Beside the slug "problem" what else can a randonneur say about the West Coast Highway? Of course, it's scenic. "Built just for cyclists," as Kevin avers? Well, for certain breeds - athletes and ascetics - it's just what the doctor ordered. Apparently, I am one of these.

Jaye immediately showed what she's made of, and disappeared up a strip of pavement conveniently built to initiate one into the world of cyclism . . . that is, vertically. And so it went, for 70 kilometres: scenic, sluggish, steeply.

As Mike and I rode along, immersed in our own thoughts, my attention became riveted, not on roadside slug viscera, but on another biological anomaly: The sun passing, through Mike's transparent plastic mud-flap, projected an image that resembled nothing so much as a giant paramecium, speeding along the road, after his wheel. Could it be that I was caught in a giant Petri dish in some Twilight Zone classroom, doomed to chase after this protozoan tormentor for eternity? And Sisyphus thought he was trapped in a bad epic!

I awoke from my reverie as the tarmac slide-show faded and a light rain started, near Jordon River. Ahead, Jaye was catching the full downpour, marked by a steely-grey squall-line, out over Juan de Fuca Strait.

I didn't see much of my young companions as the road grew steeper; Mike too pulled ahead. On the infamous 21 per cent switchbacks, I dropped my chain, searching for the granny gear. Would I retreat to the bottom of the hill, where I could get the pedals turning again? Nah. I walked to the next bend. And so it went, until a few kilometres south of our destination, the road launched itself into the void, snaking down into Port Renfrew.

There, my choice of controls -- the Coastal Kitchen Café -- met with general approval. No escargot, but plenty of delicious, fresh seafood!

But now we had to face the fact that had tempered our enjoyment

of the swoop down into town: the rigorous climb out. The sun even made a debut, though not too hot to make things unpleasant. Certainly, we were happy to strain our braking fingers, rather than aching quadriceps, on the storied switchbacks. All in all, it seemed the return was not as difficult as the approach.

At Kemp Lake control, we were met by my father, Ray Sr., and Amanda with fresh water and congratulations. Seventy-five kilometres to go, but not without incident, it turned out.

After warning Mike and Jaye to watch out for the next turn (recommended by Stephen), I slipped into a reverie -- or was it catatonia? -- cruising downhill, towards Sooke. I awoke to reality with a cry from behind. It was guardian angel Jaye, sprinting after me. Back up the hill went Ray the Route-Planner.

Sooke Road went by and, as night fell, we navigated the humps of Humback. Then, in eerie darkness, following my headlight on Prospect Lake Road hill, I met the dreaded Bonk. All day long, I'd made a mantra of that randonneur's dictum about eating an elephant - one bite at a time, one bite at a time. But how was I going to swallow its ass? I stopped to inhale a Power-Gel instead, and then granny helped me back to "speed." I wobbled on, unconcerned, as I heard my pen skitter from the open top pouch on my rack pack.

Up at the intersection of Munns Road -- a level spot on the otherwise vertiginous landscape -- I found Mike and Jaye waiting once more.

Upon announcing my glycogen-deprived state, Jaye suggested resting here for a while. Understand, I would have soldiered on, but perhaps hypoglycemic soldiers don't an army make (The Pentagon has surely done a study). Anyway, the damp roadside vegetation beckoned like a Sealy Posturepedic.

So we lay there for a while, admiring the night-shrouded fields (perhaps my daytime knowledge filled in the inky shadows). Telling big hill tales, we sighed and flapped our lips, a language the horses on the other side of the fence appeared to understand, answering in kind.

The rest and corn syrup infusion resuscitated my legs enough to traverse the remaining roller coaster to the final control at Pat Bay Highway, just after 11 O'clock.

There, a sandwich and caffeine break restored us to some semblance of devoted randos, as did the knowledge that we were nearing Victoria, AKA Blessed Relief.

A few days previously, I'd decided to cut the section to Mt. Douglas on Cordova Bay, in preference for the .1 kilometre shorter Lochside/Royal Oak run. "I'm disappointed in you, Ray," Mike said, as we turned onto Lochside. "This road is flat."

Mike's other concern about the final 25 kilometres ran to the nasty bumps on the Seaside Route; specifically King George Terrors, I mean Terrace, leading up to Harling Point. Unconvincingly, I argued that the alternative would have been to continue on Beach, a less steep, but longer hill.

We seemed to, indeed we did, accelerate through Cadboro and Oak Bays, right up to the lookout at Harling Point, where the lights of the Olympic Peninsula twinkled on the sea and a patch of

stars broke through the clouds. The agonies of Prospect Lake had receded into that special place randonneurs keep for such memories -- let's call it the Archive of Abridged Agonies. We did not allow fear to change our lives, or send us running to granny. We conquered King George with our middle chain rings. "There now; that wasn't so bad!" I said to my companions, extolling the view. The reply, if I may say so, seemed a little tepid.

As we pulled back into Cook Street Village, my father and Amanda were there to cheer us in, 17 hours and fifty minutes after we'd set out. Vancouver Island has a new 300 kilometre route.

For me, this is the point (and a decidedly high one, in comparison) I left "the scene," 11 years ago. Felled by what I now know to be chronic piriformis syndrome (AKA "sciatica," or, a pain in the ass), I languished, until diagnosed and treated, last winter. This affliction, however, took a back seat to my battle with cancer, which began in the spring of 2003. Then, in April of this year, training was interrupted by the necessity of gall bladder removal, likely damaged by precipitous weight loss (which causes the organ to be bombarded with excess cholesterol), during radiation treatment. More medical advances -- i.e. laparoscopic, or "keyhole" surgery -- allowed me to get back on the trainer (don't tell my doctor!) a week post-op.

Will I continue toward the holy grail of Super Randonneur? Do I dream of the title "Ancien?" Do I dare to wear my tights rolled, where lovely randos come and go, speaking of Michelangelo?

I cannot say. Life is a mad, unpredictable cabaret, and all those other less-than-useful clichés. But, to use one that evokes a good post ride meal, now, every ride is gravy. Pass the escargot.

Postscript: Thanks must go especially to Vancouver Island route co-ordinator Stephen Hinde, who patiently marshalled this rookie through the intricacies of Excel and the principles of brevet mapping, adding ideas and confirming mine with his encyclopaedic knowledge of Island roads and geography. Thanks also to Ken Bonner for helpful input. Amanda has accepted my apologies (I hope!) - Did I ever tell you the story about how she navigated us backwards through the VI 600 route, at night? Jaye and Mike are simply the best companions one could hope for on any Odyssean journey.

The Inaugural Vancouver Island Tsunami Brevets July 16, 2005

by Raymond J. Parker

After a month or more of preparation and a pre-ride the previous Saturday, the July 16th Vancouver Island Summer Brevets rolled out of Cook Street Village, Victoria.

Seven riders turned out for the inaugural Tsunami 300: Islanders Jim Fidler, Robert Frankham and Michael Fibiger-Crossman were

joined by Mainlanders Michel Richard, David Lach, Melissa Friesen and Scott Gater, while no-shows whittled the 200 kilometre field down to new member Kevin Card and Island route co-ordinator Stephen Hinde.

Both brevets shared a route out to Sooke, via the uncommonly scenic, albeit steep, Willis Point/Ross-Durrance Roads and - another first for Island brevets - Barrow, La Bonne and Liberty Roads, bridging Kangaroo and Rocky Point, through a forested valley.

From there, riders tackled E. Saanich Road, then Gillespie Road, which drops into beautiful Roche Cove, crosses narrow bridge across the inlet, then, alas, climbs steeply back up to Sooke Road.

From control #2, 300K riders continued out to Port Renfrew, on the challenging West Coast Highway. It was here that David Lach fell prey to the atrocious state of "paving" on the final approach. One of many potholes jumped out of the shadows and ate David's front wheel, bringing him down hard. Accordingly, Carol Hinde and Jaye Haworth sprang into action as the official B.C. Randonneurs Nursing Station and Towing Co.

If there is such thing as luck in such circumstances, it can be said that David sustained only bruises and abrasions. While his bike suffered a destroyed gear shifter, David's sense of humour, I must report, seems amazingly resilient.

I routed the final leg over Humback Road and back to Saanich, via Prospect Lake, finishing up on the renowned Seaside Touring Route, where those fast enough were treated to a crimson sunset over the Olympic Mountains.

Early morning showers gave way to blue skies and sunshine - perfect weather for any ride.

Thanks to everyone - volunteers and riders - who made this first running of the Tsunami brevets a great success.

Naming note: How did I settle on the ominous Tsunami nomenclature?

On a weekend in mid-June, Amanda Jones and I drove out on a mapping/camping trip. We arrived in Port Renfrew on the 15th - the day after the Alaska tsunami warning system had issued an alert, following an earthquake off the coast of California. Residents had scrambled for high ground, before the warning was cancelled. Not surprisingly, this incident was the talk of the town.

Fairy Lake, our favoured camping spot when we visit the area, contains sediments deposited there by the wave that inundated the west coast of Vancouver Island on January 26, 1700. Besides native oral legend, the event can be dated precisely from a Samurai diary, which recorded the devastating result to east coast Japanese fishing villages, caused by the tsunami that rolled west across the Pacific from the earthquake.

We are reminded by recent tragedy on the Indian Ocean, of the cost for awesomely beautiful geography such as we enjoy on this coast. We live on a restless crust of earth. Yet it is our playground and our inspiration. We can honour it with art (as did the great 19th century Japanese artist Hokusai), and/or by testing our puny sinews on its corrugated back.

Interior 600km 2005

Kamloops 600 Report #3

by Bob Goodison

I read Peter's and Ken's reports of the Interior 600 and decided that they weren't long-winded and whiney enough. Here is my version. The Monday before the 600, at work, I had a lower back/hip muscle spasm. By Tuesday, it was a major operation to tie my own shoes. This didn't seem like a good way to start what I remembered as an extremely challenging ride. Lots of ice-packs and heating pad sessions, combined with a visit to my doctor on Thursday to confirm that I wouldn't do permanent damage, then a short ride that evening, (no additional pain, just a little stiffness) made me decide to give it a try. After all, I had already got my first dnf out of the way two weeks before at the 400 km.

Before the start, I pointed out that the organizer, Richard Blair, who had insisted we do this particular route, had elected not to ride. Hmmm. Six of us started out into intermittent rain through Kamloops. On the first climb, still in town, we already started to spread out. Ken Bonner, Keith Nichol, Peter Mair, and Bob Boonstra took off at a pace I was not prepared to match. Randy Benz dropped back, conserving energy in preparation for finishing without a sleep break. As we left town, the rain stopped, and I watched the lead group getting smaller in the distance. Nearing the Kamloops Lake lookout, I saw we were heading into heavy rain and stopped to put on my shoe covers.

After a pee break at the lookout, and a slow ride down the hill into Savona, I figured I was so far back that I'd never catch them again. The rain stopped again. Then leaving Savona, there they were - about a minute ahead. On the next few climbs, I caught Bob, who said he had blown a tire in Savona. The lead group were once again specks in the distance. At about this point I noticed my hip had loosened up and felt pretty good. We rode together for a bit, then Bob said "Looks like a flat up ahead." Sure enough, there they were, this time Keith with the flat. We continued on. Peter, Bob and I regrouped in Cache Creek at the 1st control. As we were preparing to leave, Peter noticed he had a flat. This was not good. By the first control, half the riders already had flat tires!

We left with Peter and I riding together. Not long after, Ken and Keith caught us. They must have stopped longer in Cache Creek. On early season rides, I tend to be as strong as Peter, but once he has a few long rides under his belt, he is definitely the stronger rider. Thus, I didn't try too hard to stay on the pace line that formed. Peter had just been telling us how cold he had been on this ride last year, coming down the Hwy 24 hill in the rain after he lost his jacket. Therefore, I found it very amusing to see his jacket fly off his rack pack and flutter in the breeze on the shoulder of the road. I picked it up and stuffed it in my bar bag, and gave it to him when we regrouped at a roadside rest area. We continued North, with me dropping behind again. I stopped at the 94 Mile Motel, where I planned on sleeping on the return trip to register, saving time later. Then, down the hill into 100 Mile, where I met up with them again at Tim Hortons.

They left before me, and I had an uneventful solo ride to the

Williams Lake turnaround point, except for an ugly bit of road construction (destruction?) at Lac La Hache. Six km of potholes, gravel, and soft mud. Peter had checked in and was ready to leave when I arrived. I needed a little more food, so rode further into town. I would have liked to have had hot food, but settled for a pizza pretzel and chocolate milk as I really wanted to get back through the construction zone before dark. Then it started to rain heavily. A few km out of town, I met Bob going the other way, about an hour behind me, and Randy just a few minutes behind him.

By the time I had slogged through the mud, I was drenched and frozen. In Lac La Hache, I saw the two most beautiful signs I've ever seen. One said "Cafe", the other said "Open." I sat there with both hands wrapped around my coffee cup trying to stop shaking enough to drink it. I must have looked pretty pathetic. I asked the nice ladies if they had a garbage bag they could sell me, and they gave me one but wouldn't charge me. Fortified with three cups of coffee, I left, still cold and wet, but no longer shivering, in my poor man's Gore-Tex. Amazingly, within a couple of km, I was warm, even my hands. Lesson- Always pack a garbage bag! It was now dark, and I felt sorry for Bob and Randy, having to ride the construction zone in the dark.

I pulled into Tim Hortons in 100 Mile just as Ken was heading to his motel. I had chili and hot chocolate, grabbed a sandwich for breakfast, and pedaled up the hill to my motel. A hot shower and 4 hrs sleep helped a lot, but I woke to more rain. Also, I was using a firmer saddle than usual, and had major bruising in the sit-bone area. I was NOT looking forward to the next 200 km.

Hwy. 24 was more fun than I expected, even in the rain, until I hit Bridge Lake. From there to Lac Des Roches, was a section of frost heaves about 3 feet apart. My butt was not happy. As I climbed the Macdonald summit, the clouds got thinner and it stopped raining. Great, I thought. I didn't realize I had climbed up through the clouds until I dropped back into them on the white-knuckle descent into Little Fort. A stop for breakfast, and more coffee stopped the shivering, and I set out on the last 100 km towards Kamloops. At least the rain had stopped.

They say the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results. This was the 3rd 600 I had ridden that ended with this section. Every time, including this one, I think "Only 100km, no more big hills, I should go fast." Stupid. The hills are bigger than remembered, there is always a head wind, and I bonk at Barriere. I stopped, rested and snacked from my feed bag, and slogged on at a more sensible pace into the wind towards Kamloops.

Turning off Hwy 5 onto Hwy 1, the headwind became a slight tailwind for the last few km. About 3km before the finish, I was caught by Ken and Keith, and we rode to the finish together. A tough ride, but no mechanicals unless you count the flat tire I got in the parking lot at the FINISH CONTROL. How often does that happen?

Congratulations to Randy, the Energizer Rando, for finishing this ride without a sleep break. I couldn't have done it. Also, a note to Ken- I saw a fox and several thousand ground squirrels near 150 Mile, and a total of 5 deer on Hwy 24. (but no mastodons).

How Far Did They Ride? You Gotta be Kiddin

by Brian List

As we were driving up I-5 toward the starting point of the Peace Arch 1000 in White Rock BC I commented, "This is really a long drive and it's only half as far as we're gonna ride". Neither Amy Pieper nor Peter McKay responded to my comment. "Oh, I get it" I thought, "It's not appropriate to talk about how far we're gonna ride". The more I think about it I realize it's probably not a good idea to let yourself comprehend the amount of riding you are about to do when you are riding such distances. It's best just to focus on the distance to the next stop.

The next morning we were up at 5:00am. We loaded up our bikes and started peddling toward the start, which was Canadian Customs. There was a line of cars already, at the border crossing. We got in line, the customs official asked for our passports, then asked how long we were planning on staying in Canada. "Ten minutes or so" we said. We explained that we were in a timed event which would go from White Rock down to St. Helens, OR and back. He shook his head and told us to move along.

We decided to get our control cards signed at the customs office and headed in that direction. Karen Smith from Vancouver BC was waiting for us there. She had her bike all loaded up and was ready to ride with us. We would be an international team of sorts. Very apropos in light of the name of the ride "Peach Arch - St. Helens - Peace Arch 1000km". We got our control cards signed and were off to a roaring stop. We now had to go through US customs. Peter, Amy and I would probably have gotten in the long line of cars, but luckily for us, Karen has lots of experience crossing the border on a bike and directed us to the pedestrian entrance around the back of the building. We explained what we were doing to another incredulous official and soon were on our way.

We began by bumping our way for ten miles down an old concrete slab highway called Peace Portal Drive. I commented, "This is going to feel real good on our butts after 615 miles". I'm glad I didn't know how accurate my prediction would be.

We breezed along through Ferndale and Bellingham and soon were peddling across the Skagit flats. By the time we reached the first control at the fruit stand on Fir Island, the day had become completely glorious. The sun was out, the mountains sparkled in the distance and the temperature was perfect. Of course, it was only 9am. We could even see Mt. Rainier, a little white speck on the horizon. I realized that before our ride for the day was done we would be sleeping in a motel on the other side of that mountain. I quickly put that thought out of my mind.

We soon had made short work of the climb over Hwy 534 and were tooling along Hwy 9 when we saw two cyclists ahead. As we approached, I noticed one of them was wearing a SIR jersey. It was Mark and Wayne. They had come out to ride along with us. Spirits were already high but they really lifted when Mark and Wayne showed up. The miles flew by as we rolled along telling stories of past disasters and exploits. After about 100k they split

off to head up the hill to Redmond while we continued toward Issaquah.

By this time it was getting very hot, Karen took a photo of the thermometer she has on her bike when we had stopped for water in Issaquah, 38° Centigrade, that's 100° to us metric system challenged folks! We took it easy on the slight climb out of Issaquah. I was running through my water like it was water. By the time, we had reached Black Diamond, only 30k; I had drunk both bottles. We stopped at a ballpark where I filled my bottles from a hose.

About 6pm, we pulled into the control at Enumclaw where we had dinner at a Quisno's. We agreed that the combination of sweat, dirt and sunscreen had us feeling awfully sticky.

Karen took a humongous pull as we headed toward our destination for the night. The pace slowed, when I took over the lead, as we turned onto Orville Road. "No more bad hills between here and Oregon" I promised. Surprise! The route turned onto 264th St instead of continuing on Orville Rd. The grade on 264th is a real leg breaker. "So much for no more hills" I thought. I deserved the comments I received. More about 264th St. later.

We stopped in McKenna for more food and water. I was starving even though we had only gone 60K since we had dinner. I needed a lump of something that would sit in my stomach so I wouldn't feel constantly hungry. A ham and Cheese burrito was just the ticket. Karen found a starving kitty. She fed him dabs of her energy gel. I felt bad because I had wolfed down my Burrito before I noticed the kitty.

"It really is flat between here and Centralia" I announced as we hit the road. I'm not sure anyone believed me. The final 50k to the control were uneventful.

Amy's husband Robin was waiting for us at the Motel 6 in Centralia (386k, 241mi) with dinner. He even put out the SIR control sign so we would know which room was ours. We made it in at 1am, only one hour behind schedule. Considering the extra stops we made because of the heat, we were doing great.

I didn't sleep well. I had stomach cramps and had to get up to use the bathroom repeatedly through the night. I ate a lighter breakfast than usual but brought along a PBJ sandwich that I nibbled on as we warmed up during the first few miles of the day's ride. I felt better and better as the day went by.

Soon we had reached the major obstacle of the ride, The Lewis and Clark Bridge. This imposing structure, which crosses the Columbia River connecting Longview Washington with Rainier Oregon, combines a long steep climb and heavy traffic with a narrow shoulder which is never swept. Karen's picture does not do justice to the amount of crap that is piled up on the narrow shoulder. The size and volume of the wood chips dropped by the constant barrage of log trucks is astounding, and there is nothing you can do except ride straight through it. Mixed in with the chips were nuts, bolts, a 6" long coil spring, and even piece of rebar. You'd better have good tires on your bike if you want to tackle this one! There's nothing for it but to breathe deep, keep a good grip on your bar, and keep peddling til you're across. Oh, and don't look down, it's 210' above the river at the high point.

The final 30k to the turn around point in St Helens Oregon (501k 311mi) was uneventful if hot. We sat in the shade of a convenience store and ate our lunch. We had made it to the halfway point in 30 hours (noon Sunday) and we had 45 hours to make it to the finish. It wasn't in the bag but I for one felt a lot better than I had when I started out that morning. If only it would cool down! We had only been at the control for a half-hour or so when we noticed two bikes flying by. It was Eric and Ken, the other two crazies that were doing the ride. They had started three hours behind us and just managed to catch us at the turn around point.

Soon we were returning north, making a second crossing of the Lewis and Clark Bridge. For some reason we convinced ourselves that, there would be less crap in the road on the return leg, wrong! Still it seemed easier the second time. We stopped for water as we were leaving Longview. It was getting seriously hot. Karen and Amy needed to stop in Lexington about 10k up the road from Longview. Peter and I continued slowly. All of a sudden, I was riding by myself. That didn't feel right so I stopped and waited for the others. When they came by it was clear that Peter was having a hard time with the heat. Somewhere along this stretch, Eric and Ken blew by us like we were going backward. Peter lay down for a rest just outside of Winlock, home of the world's largest egg.

Peter left Winlock before the rest of us, stating we would catch him before long. A few minutes later Amy Karen and I hit the road. When we got to the next town, Napavine, I noticed that the route sheet said to turn right when the route actually went left. I assured Amy and Karen that I knew the way. We were riding into a stiff crosswind by this point and the going had gotten tedious. One of the women announced it was time for a break and I reminded them there was a portapotty at the intersection of SR603 and Shorey Rd. For those of you who are not cyclists the issue of, uh... where to go... comes up constantly on these rides. Finding a Sanican is sorta like "hitting the jackpot: if you will.

The final 10k or so into Centralia control was a grind even though it was dead flat. We were tired and hot and the wind bothered us. We pulled into the convenience store at the corner of Main and Yew slightly worried. Peter wasn't there although he had left before us. I tried calling his cel but only got his voice mail. Amy was absolutely sure this was where he said to meet him because they had stopped there on a ride just the weekend before. We decided to get food and wait. It's probably always a good decision to eat and wait when you are in doubt. Peter showed up a little while later. He had followed the route sheet, turning right in Napavine. Luckily, he came across a friendly policeman who set him on the right path.

We felt confident as we left Centralia for the final stretch to the overnight Control in Enumclaw, only 70k to go to a nice hot shower and bed. However, the fun was just about to start. It was dark now as we sped along Hwy 507 between Tenino and Rainier. We started up a slight rise when we heard a crunching sound from Peter's bike. We went around a corner and slowed down, no Peter. I decided to go back and see what was going on, there sat Peter in the ditch fiddling with his bike. "I'm, ok" he called out, probably knowing I'd be worried seeing him in the ditch. "Chainring bolts came out" he calmly stated. "Good thing I have some spares in

my bag, I'd never find them in the dark." "He carries spare chainring bolts?" I thought. I never would have thought of bringing spare chainring bolts. Good thing he did though, that could have been a ride ender. It took Peter a good half-hour to replace the bolts and tighten them with the multi tool. I stood over him and shined my light into the traffic coming around the corner. Amazingly, of the 30 or so cars that passed only one slowed and asked if we needed help. I mean here's a guy and an upside down bike in a ditch in the dark. Wouldn't you want to make sure he was ok? What's this world coming to?

Bike repaired, we rolled along. Soon we were past Yelm and in what should have been the home stretch. We just needed to turn onto 264th then Orville Rd. and pretty soon we'd be there. Just one problem, can't find 264th. We went from 268th to 260th. We stopped and had a long discussion. This couldn't be right. We thought that maybe the street designation changed between where we turned on and off 264th the night before. I remembered that we went past a school with a flashy sign just before we turned off 264th. We tentatively headed down 260th. Hey! There's the school with the flashy sign, must be the right way after all. We let go of the brakes and bombed down a steep hill. Whoops, there's a T intersection at the bottom of the hill, don't remember that. The street sign says 70th Ave NE, Don't remember that either. "Maybe we just didn't notice the corner last night" I offered. Peter and I agreed the road to the right looked more promising. "At least it's in the direction of the road we want to be on" someone said. We went right then round a corner and started climbing a steep long hill. The street sign said we were on Webster Rd none of us remembered coming down this big hill. We decided to turn around. We stopped again at the T intersection. Do we go back up 264th?

I don't think anyone actually panicked. However, things were not looking good, we were not only lost, we were down in some kinda hole with no way to go but up. We decided to follow 70th Ave probably because it wasn't as steep as going the other way. We saw a red light off in the distance. "Well that has to be something" someone said. As we got closer, we could see it was a traffic light. The map I'm looking at now shows it was only about 3k from the T intersection to the traffic light but it seemed like eight at the time. The only hint of where we were at the light was a sign declaring we were in the Graham Fire District. "Where's Graham?" asked Karen. I started to say something like I actually knew but thought better of it. Peter flagged down a car. The kids in the car told us if we took a right and followed 224th we would come to the Orting Kapowsin Hwy. I remembered from the Daffodil Ride that would bring us into Orting which in only 3 or 4K off the course. So off we went and after two fairly big climbs and one extra knarley decent we eventually got back on course. Once back on course we checked our computers and noticed that we had only added about 5k to our distance. Unfortunately, we added at least an hour and an undetermined amount of stress to the ride.

The climb up to the Plateau was not to bad and it wasn't long before we were rolling into the control in Enumclaw (733k, 456mi). Peter commented, it was a moral victory that we reached to control before dawn. I think we made it in around 3am. The shower was wonderful and I slept well.

The first thing we did when we awoke was look out the window. Yes! Blessed wonderful clouds; thank goodness. We were on the road around 8am. We had 168 miles to go and 25 hours to do it in. We got wet between Enumclaw and Black Diamond. We enjoyed the rain, thankful that we would not have to ride through another day of heat.

A few hours later we passed the 500-mile mark. That's where I have had to abandon on my two prior attempts at long brevets. It was too early to begin celebrating, but I knew I was going to make it this time. The hills on this part of the course were harder to climb than they were two days before but no one appeared to be suffering.

Finally, we were over the last big hill and onto the Skagit flats. Only 90k to go. We started up a small rise when I noticed that Amy and Peter had stopped. I went back to find out what was happening. Amy couldn't shift her rear derailleur. Peter fiddled with it and we took off again. We soon found that Amy was only able to use her front derailleur, not a problem on the flats but we still had Chuckanut Drive to go.

Chuckanut Drive in the dark was interesting and my legs and butt were feeling the long miles but I kept turning the peddals and soon we were in Bellingham with only 40k to go. By this time the batteries my headlamp had burned out so I couldn't read the route sheet. I would have to rely on the others to make sure we stayed on route.

Somewhere past Bellingham, Amy let us know we were getting sleepy. We stopped by a little store. It was closed but well lit. We had something to eat and Amy rested for a few minutes. Then we took off into the dark. Eventually we made it through Ferndale and into the home stretch.

Ah, the home stretch, remember Peace Portal Way? Cachunk, cachunk, cachunk. 15k of constant cachunking. We could see the lights of Blaine ahead but the cachunking seemed to go on forever. I looked over at Amy and asked, "Do you think we're in hell?" Amy laughed as the road got even bumpier. I looked up at the sky and yelled, "I didn't mean that!" I felt like my saddle had been stapled to my butt, however the end was near.

We pulled up toward Canadian Customs not remembering whether to get in the line of cars or not. Peter yelled, "Over here". We coasted around the cars to the pedestrian entrance and applause from Peter, Karen and her sister. What a Sister! Meeting us at 2:40am. She had bread and peanut butter too, and that was a good thing because where were no restaurants open at that hour. We stood around in a daze eating our peanut butter sandwiches and staring off into space. The emency of our accomplishment not sinking in. A friendly Border Guard took our picture. We hugged Karen and her sister and headed back toward our hotel. At US Customs, we were asked how long we had been in Canada. About 15 minutes we said. "We took a little bike ride" we told the official.

PS. We got lost the second night because we turned onto Hwy 7 instead of Hwy 161.

August 13th 200km Adventure Ride

2nd Guglielmo Segato Memorial

by David Sudbury

Brevet Report

Since the turn out was limited and due to the complexity of the route the randonneurs rode the brevet as a group. It is hope that in subsequent years the route marking and the course guide will be further improved to allow individual riders to successfully negotiate the route.

Brevet Statistics

Elapsed Time: 12 hours

Riding Time: 8.9 hours

Distance: 200.61 km

Route Overview

Starting and ending at Spinnakers Brew pub this ride is essentially a lower island water front tour. Spinnakers to Burnt Bridge (behind Swanigan lake). This part of the ride, accomplished fairly early in the morning, will provide a wonderful vista of the Sannich peninsula and then the waterfront properties that line Swanigan Lake. You ride up the Koksilah River to the famous "Burnt Bridge". Climbing Kapour hill you will follow two grades of logging road, primary and secondary, over to Weeks Lake and then on to Valentine Mountain. At that point just before you descend, if you look to the right, there is a tremendous prow of land that if you go out, you will see, if it is not to cloudy, a vista encompassing Jordan Meadows and the various mid island mountains up the spine of the Island to the north. From there you essentially descend back down to the top of the hill before Jordan River. From there reality sinks in as you contemplate a 69k ride back to Spinnakers before last call.

The Mount Baker 400: A Very Tough Ride

by Kevin Bruce

All those that completed the Mount Baker 400, stand up and take a bow. This was one of the toughest 400's that ever devised, and that it included a ride up Mount Baker should come as no surprise since the route was devised by those responsible for giving us the Triple Mountain Challenge: John Bates and Danelle Laidlaw.

Just how tough was the Mount Baker 400? Although I don't know exactly what the total climbing distance or grade was, I do know that from Glacier at the foot of Mount Baker to the summit was roughly 40 km and, given the speed and pedal resistance I experienced, would say it varied from 6% to 10%. These are just guesses and are mere numbers, but it's very easy to convey a more accurate picture of the challenge of this route by looking at the finishing times of the five riders who rode both the Spring 400 and the Mount Baker 400:

Eric Fergusson	16:12	17:59	+1hr. 47 min.
Henry Berkenbos	17:00	19:30	+2hrs. 30 min.
Manfred Kuchenmuller	17:29	20:55	+3hrs. 26 min
Ron Himschoot	23:18	23:45	+27 min.
Ron Penner	23:18	25:05	+1hr. 47 min.

For these five riders, the average time for the Mount Baker 400 was almost 2 hours longer than for the Spring 400. Consider also that the weather last spring was cloudy with rain and heavy winds, while the Mount Baker expedition enjoyed a day that was sunny, warm, and relatively calm. Moreover, one would expect that having been through several rides in the previous few months that these five riders would now be in better shape than they were in the spring. So, with better weather conditions, longer daylight hours, and stronger riders, the empirical evidence suggests that this was a very tough ride indeed.

The view, by the way, was spectacular.

Mount Baker by Bicycle or Miata? A Comparative Analysis

by Kevin Bruce

People as individuals can be quite smart but, when allowed to act as a group, they might do all manner of questionable things such as start a war, play hockey, or attend a concert of country and western music. Randonneuring, it could be argued, is yet another example of how this collective insanity works. That is, what we do as a group is crazy, though none of us individually can be called unintelligent. Indeed, the BC Randonneurs claim amongst their ranks a wide range of educated, talented, professional people who, in their daily lives, contribute greatly to the betterment of the society we live in. (Okay, there are a couple of judges in the club, but we'll ignore that for now.) The question I'd like to raise is: are we nuts? Are randonneurs born this way, or can we get over it? Are we genetically pre-disposed to riding ridiculously long distances up steep mountains? Or is this behavior the result of an early childhood trauma such as inadequate potty training and can therefore be corrected through psychotherapy? In short, what's our problem anyway?

Take, for example, the events of August 6, 2005, when twenty-one cyclists, intent on completing a randonée of slightly more than 400 km, set forth from Burnaby at six o'clock in the morning on what was to become a hot, sun-baked day. The riders undertook this challenge fully aware that the itinerary included cycling to the highest possible point on Mount Baker in Washington State.

For the most part, this was a very pleasant ride along mostly flat roads where one encounters some lovely sights. For example, early in the ride we passed through the All-American town of Lynden, Washington which one enters along a tree-lined boulevard with baskets of flowers in full bloom hanging from the lampposts. To the right is a perfectly manicured golf course, and to the left is the clubhouse. There is neither a single bit of garbage on the streets nor weed in the grass, and dust-free late model cars softly purr along at a very reasonable, cautious pace. The houses are wood frame with front porches and are perfectly painted like an idealized movie set. Inside one home, a housewife named Betty wears a kitchen apron over a gingham dress as she puts a fresh-baked apple pie on the window sill to cool.

Much later in the ride, the route travels alongside Whatcom Lake which is also quite lovely. Quiet, rolling tree-lined roads take the cyclist along the lakeshore with its numerous cottages crowding the water's edge. Everywhere are the sights, sounds, and smells of fun in the summertime sun: barbeques sizzle with burgers and hotdogs; swimmers dive in the water and playfully splash each other; relaxing vacationers fill every available lawn chair. Betty has brought an apple pie for dessert. The bullroar of speedboats cracks the air scaring away what little wildlife remains; fish gasp for oxygen in the lead-tainted lake water; the pungent aroma of outboard motor exhaust hangs in the gentle breeze.

Between the above two scenes of idyllic American life, however, there is the climb up Mount Baker. The ascent of approximately forty kilometers, at an average grade approaching ten per cent, in temperatures hovering near 25 degrees Celsius, tests not only the physical capabilities of the riders but also calls into question their sanity. Clearly, this is not normal behavior considering the dehydration, sore muscles, back pain, butt discomfort, bruised palms, and general exhaustion that threatens cyclists attempting this climb. A mouthful of Betty's apple pie while watching the late afternoon sunlight glint prism colors off the oil film on Whatcom Lake sounds much more normal.

Let's do a bit of comparative analysis to see if we can discover just how nuts we are, if indeed we are nuts at all. To this end, we will compare the BC Randonneurs to the Puget Sound Miata Club. The reason for this particular choice of comparison is that this other club held an event the same day as ours, and headed to the same destination - Artist's Point at the top of Mount Baker. At first, it seemed mere coincidence that several shiny Mazda Miata convertibles whizzed past on the climb up Baker. When several dozen more of these vanity vehicles continued the barrage, it became apparent that some sort of event was taking place. A simple Google search turns up not only the Puget Sound Miata Club (www.ps-miata.org) but dozens of other Miata clubs worldwide in Canada, China, South Africa, South America, Middle East, and so on. (Actually, the 'Middle East' web link turned up the following message: *"There are no official chapters in the Middle East, but there is at least one enthusiast in Israel who is looking to form one."* His name is Bob Novak and his phone number is 42865.)

So, what do Miata clubs do for fun? Well, on this day, they met in Mount Vernon at 9:30 AM, drove scenic back roads to Maple Bay

where they took a rest stop, then headed up to Artist's Point at the top of Mount Baker, the same place we were headed. By 2:00 PM, they had returned to Glacier at the foot of Mount Baker for lunch, and then headed home. Like that of the BC Randonneurs, the Miata Club website includes ride reports. I guess that the Mount Baker ride was an easy one for the Miata participants unlike the one last spring where, on a fairly cool day, several of the drivers put down their convertible tops and therefore, the report says, were "roughing it".

Let's begin our comparison with the start and finish times for each event. The Miata Club met at 9:30 AM and began their ride at ten o'clock; the BC Randonneurs mostly gathered shortly after 5:30 AM and departed at six o'clock. The Miata event was finished after the meal that took place in Glacier at 2:00 PM so one assumes that everyone was home in time for supper. The participants in the rando event, on the other hand, didn't finish until at least midnight and some not until 7:00 AM the next day. Since the human body needs sleep, and that the weekend is the best time to make up for lost sleep, I'd have to say that the Miata Club clearly has a more civilized approach insofar as both start time and length of event are concerned. Doctors and health professionals would agree.

Score - Miata: 1, Randos: 0.

Another thing to consider with regard to length of event is that by virtue of shorter events, the Miata people get to spend more time with their families.

Score - Miata: 2, Randos: 0.

Then, there's the food and drink. Since those Miata folks don't have to worry about consuming enough calories and liquids, when they meet for lunch they can eat anything they darn well please. Moreover, while driving a Miata, it is far easier to consume a double latté than while riding a bicycle.

Score - Miata: 3, Randos: 0.

The social aspects of belonging to a club are very important and, given that all the members of the Miata club will finish an event at the same time, they get to spend more time socializing, making new friends, and learning more about each other.

Score - Miata: 4, Randos: 0

Finally, there is the matter of physical fitness resulting from participation in club events and the benefits derived thereof. Judging by the photos on both websites, I think it's safe to say that the Randonneurs carry far less body fat...

Score - Miata: 4, Randos: 1

...smile more frequently...

Score - Miata: 4, Randos: 2

...and that all the fresh air we get invigorates our minds such that we are far less likely to listen to country and western music.

Score - Miata: 4, Randos: 157

Well, look at that - we came out ahead. They're nuts and we're not.

When's the next ride?

You Pack Your Own Chute

by Sarah Gallazin

The full moon beamed her clear light on farm fields all around us. Fog hugged the fields and shrouded them in ghostly glowing "dry ice". We were riding to Monroe, WA on day 1 of the August 600 km Lower Mainland Brevet. I will remember this night as one of Mother Nature's most memorable shows! I was thrilled when earlier, just outside of Granite Falls, the moon popped up over the mountains' black silhouettes. The roads had become quiet, the air cool, and our spirits buoyed as the moon watched over us. We dreamed of a McDonald's hamburger waiting for us only minutes away.

My day had started with difficulty. I could not keep up the pace. My riding was sluggish, and I had to push and strain with every pedal stroke. My knees and back began to complain. I was sure I must be sick. I struggled for 50 km and finally John rode behind me and noticed my wheel was jammed up against my frame! My new tires had been replaced by a bike shop, so I could not be faulted (this time) for replacing the wheels incorrectly. However, as everyone knows "you pack your own chute" so I was guilty of not checking my wheels before I left.

Once the wheel was straightened in the drop, I could fly! John had a hard time catching up to me for a change.

I mentioned my mechanical problem to "Jim" who confided that he had traveled from Montana to ride his first 600 km brevet.

The day was fair, the roads were as good as chip seal can be, and my patient riding partner did most of the pulling. What more can a girl want? We played leap-frog with Melissa, Scott, Jim, Laura and Ron P. and Ron H. for a while.

The upper Skagit near Marblemount was spectacular. The forests and the river were quiet and abundant with fishing holes which begged to be explored. No time. Wheels gotta spin.

My second flat of the day cost us valuable time, as it happened just outside of Granite Falls in the dark. By the time we reached McDonalds it was closed! Have you ever seen a grown woman cry over food?! No hamburger. But John, always striving to show me a good time, suggested we get our dinner from the heated food case at the Shell Station in Granite Falls. An excellent suggestion, as nothing else was open.

We ate, what I think was cheese-covered potatoes, sitting on two milk crates on the dusty cement of a gas station watching the locals come and go. I'll bet not too many gals have spent their Saturday nights like that! It was fun. Another nice date, John.

We had booked into what reminded me of the Bates Motel in Alfred Hitchcock's movie. It was the only hotel in Monroe, WA, whose proprietor agreed to accept a bag before the ride and keep it for us until after the ride. It was actually "closed" but the fellow doing the "renovations" rents out newly completed rooms. Nothing wrong with the room - bed, windows, running water, electricity -- and then we heard it.....deafening thunder which

shook the walls, the bed, the spokes in our wheels, and all the filings in our teeth. A bloody train. We were 10 feet from the track!

It's amazing what you can sleep through if you cycle for 18 hours. We got 3 ½ hours of sleep and headed out on the road for a couple of hours of night riding.

The fields in the distance looked like an ocean. We could not tell what lay under the mist. The high points of the land looked like floating islands. Eerie and beautiful. Fog on your glasses, however, is not eerie or beautiful. It made route finding and navigating rumble strips on the road challenging.

In Stanwood we met Dave and Nina for a hearty breakfast at a local restaurant. It was so good, and the conversation so pleasant, we spent 2 hours there!

Now I was feeling tired and was worried we wouldn't make the control in Ferndale. Three nosebleeds later we arrived at Denny's. The staff there has seen it all before. They didn't bat an eye on two stinky, dirty, blood spotted cyclists with enormous appetites.

We continued riding in the afternoon heat of day 2. Outside of Lynden our bikes attracted the interest of several local canines. One little feller wanted to run as hard as he could under John's front wheel. Luckily his legs were too short and John rode too fast! There seemed to be "packs" of little 'dogs gone wild' out there.

When we got to the Sumas border crossing and told the Guard what we were doing he congratulated us and asked "how do you feel?" When I muttered "Horrible, sick, tired..." he retorted "You look good, congratulations".

The last part of the ride was my least favourite. Mission to Haney at supper time. No hecklers or erratic drivers this time. A delicious A & W frosty mug of root beer and several hamburgers were our rewards at the finish.

As we waited, our other riders arrived. Melissa, Laura, and Jim having completed their first 600. Congratulations and root beers all around! Jim told me he was thinking of me on the ride. He told us about a fall he had riding in a pack over railroad tracks. It turns out he was having a heck of a time keeping up. Straining, pushing, and not able to attain any speed. (Sound familiar?) Finally he looked at his wheel, remembering our earlier conversation. Since his railroad track fall, his brake had been rubbing his wheel for most of the ride and the brake rubber was shredded!

This is my second 600 and both have been a challenge. I enjoyed this ride, especially several days later. After, I always reflect on what I saw, things I did, and the funny and frustrating events that happened. Life is simpler on the road. Riding long distances makes you appreciate the small things in life, a quiet bed, a hamburger, a well-tuned and free-spinning wheel...right, Jim?!

Calibration

By Harold "lets keep the mileage straight" Bridge

The content of an e-mail from Sir Prez alerted me to the fact that not all members are aware of a computer calibration facility that exists along Zero Avenue east of Route #13 & the Canada Customs border control building.

Some years ago a surveyor bloke took a GPS unit down to Zero Av (straight & almost all flat) & recorded distances along there starting at International Boundary Marker (IBM) #20, the first one east of Route #13. Although we only use the extremes he also recorded intermediate distances with recordings made on road centrelines:

The GPS hand held unit used triangulates with the office unit & the satellite, so I guess these figures are fairly accurate

Station	Kilometres
IBM #20	0
272nd St	0.214
LeFeuvre Rd	2.031
IBM #21	2.787
IBM #22	3.635
Bradner Rd	3.647
Defehr Rd	4.183
Ross Rd	5.267
IBM #24	6.153
IBM #25	6.832
Mount Lehman Rd	6.890
Hamm Road	7.688
IBM #26	8.444

Then Gordy Cook went down there with a tape & a pot of paint. He measured off 44 metres east of IBM #20 & painted a line. He also painted a line 44 metres west of IBM #26 on the north side of the road. So, the scheme is:

Check your tyre pressure, have a standard you normally use.

Set your wheel on the first white line. Ensure the wheel magnet does one revolution before passing the sensor.

Ride as straight a line as you can to IBM #26. Your computer should read 8.4 kms. If it doesn't then a simple bit of arithmetic can tell you how much to change your calibration.

Then ride back to IBM #20 & see if you got it right.

I have been riding 25mm Michelin Axial Carbons for some time now. I have only recently done the calibration ride even though I

knew my computer was calibrated for 23mm Michelins. I had to up the calibration from 2095 to 2105 & got it spot on. It was a good job I did, I was assisting Keith Fletcher with his Flatlander/Highlander route check & we finished up with 199.5! So we put the squiggly bit back in.

Keith & Ken Finish Well at 2005 Gold Rush Randonnée 1200 km - July 19-23

by Eric Fergusson

Keith Fraser was one of four co-first finishers at the Gold Rush Randonnée (GRR) with a time of 58:26. Keith was also first finisher at the last GRR in 2001 with a similar time, 58:55.

Ken Bonner was the next rider in with a time of 63:36. This is the second 1200 completed this year by Ken. He intends to do all four American 1200s in 2005 - next up is Boston Montréal Boston, August 18-21.

GRR is hosted by the Davis Bike Club and runs through Northern California. This was the second running of the event. Riders faced some extreme heat and tough climbing. Ken noted that there wasn't nearly enough ice-cream on the route. There were 66 finishers from 87 starters, an attrition rate of 24%. There was also a 1000+200km brevet combo which 14 riders signed on for.