

From Sea to Sea: An Exploration of Canada by Bicycle

May – September 1999

9524 kilometers - 122 days

VERSION 2.1
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Feel free to share this with others.

On my webpage I also have versions in handheld formats (Palm, PocketPC) as well as over 200 photos of my trip with explanatory captions. Drop by and have a look. If the url does not work, it is because yet another free web-site hosting service is no longer "free". Just e-mail me for an updated url.

Thank-you.

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Introduction

Here are answers to some of the common questions I had to answer about my trip

Who am I and what am I doing?

My name is Trevor Hennessey and in the summer of 1999 I bicycled across Canada from Crescent Beach on the West Coast to St. Johns on the East Coast. I set up a website so my friends and family could follow along with me on my journey and this is a transcript of that journey.

Bicycle across Canada! Are you nuts?

Although people may not come out and directly say this when I tell them what I did, I find that it is usually inferred in the conversation. The reason I undertook this endeavor was to have the opportunity to see more of this grand country that I, among 30 million other people, call home.

The actual idea of bicycling across Canada came to me in 1998 while I was working in Montreal. I found that I loved living in a new city and enjoyed experiencing a culture other than the one I grew up with (no matter what some people say, Quebec is truly different from B.C.) With this realization, I had the desire to experience the rest of Canada and what better way to do it than by bicycle?

But why not go by car or train?

The answer to this is quite simple. Just as tourists can't truly experience Paris by flying in on Monday and out on Sunday, neither can one truly experience the Prairies while encased in a metal box moving at 100 km/hr. Instead, they would be missing out on the sounds of the wind rustling through the fields of wheat and all the other aspects of nature. There is more to Canada than Hwy. #1 and to truly get a taste of the country you need to get to know the people who live there. On bicycle I have the opportunity to move at a slower pace. To fully discover the areas I pass through and yet still be able to cover enough distance each day to cross the country in a somewhat timely manner.

When traveling by bicycle I also have the chance to meet the most interesting people. My lodging is a tent but when looking for a place to camp for the night I just start knocking on farm doors asking if I can pitch my tent out by their barn. More often than not I will be offered a shower and a hot meal (two things that are always appreciated). In this manner, the true character of the region is revealed to me.

Why now?

The main reason for choosing to do the trip at the time I did was quite simple, I had the time. I had just graduated from Simon Fraser University with my B.Sc. and really needed some time to recuperate from the previous 5 years of study.

How long did the trip take?

Well when I left I had hoped to be back home by the start of September but as I had no real deadline and was enjoying the "scenic" route it ended up taking me nearly four months and 9524 km to complete.

Disclaimer:

My website was originally started so that my friends and family back home could follow along with me on my trip. Well with all the publicity my page has gotten my readership has jumped far beyond this. Because of this I felt that I should add a small disclaimer for those of you not familiar with me and my story. Please understand that most of my entries are written late at night after over 100 km of bicycling. At that time my emotions are laid bare for all to see and my heart is on my sleeve. On rough days I may make broad sweeping negative statements which reflect how I am feeling at that time. These may sometimes come across as overly harsh when I did not mean for it to be that way or to meant to only refer to a small subset of people. Now I could have edited out those portions later but I felt that in order for you to truly feel as I felt I needed to leave them in. Please read with this in mind and enjoy. Thank-you.

Gee that sounds great. I appreciate the hundreds of hours you have spent typing this up and posting pictures on your webpage. Is there anything I can do?

If you enjoy reading about my trip let others know about it and the abbreviated book may be freely distributed for non-commercial purposes so share it around. If you would like the entire book please send me \$5 US through Paypal (www.paypal.com) using trevor_hennessey@yahoo.com as my user name and I will e-mail you the entire document. In doing so you will encourage me to continue publishing my travelogues and help keep independent publishing possible for us little guys.

Sincerely,

Trevor Hennessey

P.S. I have posted over 200 photos of my trip with captions at www.anexplorationofcanada.bravepages.com. If the webpage does not work just e-mail me.

British Columbia

There are no flat roads in British Columbia! Alright, I might be exaggerating a little bit but along the route that I traveled there was only one day of level riding. Everywhere else it was rolling hills and mountains, making for a very challenging ride, especially considering I was not in peak physical condition at the start of my trip. If anyone ever has an interest in seeing the raw, natural beauty of BC yet does not have much time to spend, I would highly recommend bicycling (or GASP ... driving) from Revelstoke to Canmore. This section of road was the most beautiful and scenic portion of the BC portion of my trip and the climbs were not as strenuous as elsewhere. Their sheer size and the power evident in the mountains as they towered majestically over me was a constant source of wonder as I pedaled my way along. In terms of bicycling, most of the roads in BC are in good repair with decent shoulders. Some parts, the climb from Salmo to New Denver and the one from Golden to Yoho National Park especially, were extremely scary due to the lack of a shoulder, winding roads, and large trucks.

In terms of my personal thoughts, British Columbia is the first leg of my cross-Canada tour and was the first time I have been on tour for any real length of time. I have discovered many things about myself and bicycle touring in general, both about my limits and the wonderful hospitality of the people of this great country. My hope is that through reading my travel diary, you will be able to vicariously experience the ups and downs of such an enormous undertaking and learn along with me.

I hope you enjoy reading about my adventure and please, if you enjoy a part let me know via e-mail. It is your comments and letters that help to make my trip so enjoyable.

Sincerely,

Trevor Hennessey

Day 1. May 16, 1999. Distance 11 km. Total 11 km. Surrey

This was mainly just a test ride. I loaded up my bike and drove down to Crescent Beach with Mom and Dad. After a bit of a photo-shoot I then cycled back to our house in Surrey. The bike feels good and stable. I am a bit nervous about the trip but I am feeling pretty prepared.

Day 2. May 17, 1999. Distance 58 km. Total 69 km. Mission

I did my final packing last night and it took me until 3:00am in the morning. Strewn out all over the living room floor it sure looks like I have a lot of crap! I just don't know what I will really need.

Today is the big day! The weather is really crappy, rain and wind, but with all my raingear on it is ok. Because of my late start (11:30 am) I only had time to make it to Mission before looking for a place to stay. Today it just poured rain, a real deluge. I ended up staying the night at a motel because the rain was just too horrible and I figured that I would break into this crazy bicycle touring slowly. That and my parents generously offered to pay for it ;-).

Day 3. May 18, 1999. Distance 94 km. Total 164 km. Hope

I am writing this from Comput Internet Cafe in Agassiz at 2:00pm so I am not sure where I will end up today. I hope to make it to Hope. The weather is still really poor, cold and wet. I just passed a guy on bike who is going to Vancouver from Kelowna. He said that it is pretty cold on the passes and when I checked the weather report is said that Manning Park had snow yesterday. Before I leave Agassiz I am going to go and buy a pair of snow-pants and a long sleeve cycling jersey. I figure with those I should survive. To my friends back home, pray for good weather and that the passes are clear when I go through them. I will write more later. Cya.

Here is the rest:

Today was the first day that I felt I was really on tour. The magnitude of what I am undertaking is now starting to really hit me. The thing is, I am not worried about bicycling across Canada, though maybe I should be. I am really concerned about getting to Calgary in time to catch my flight home for convocation. Oh yes, there is the small matter of writing and giving the student address as well. I feel the deadline "Calgary by June 3rd" looming over me. When I left I had 18 days to cover the 1300 km from Vancouver to Calgary which works out to an average of 72 km per day, not factoring in poor weather, mountain passes, or mechanical (or rider!) Breakdowns. I am starting to second guess myself, maybe I should have waited until after graduation to leave? Yet, then I would have been sitting around home for 18 days! Well, I guess worst case scenario is that I have to rent a car or catch a greyhound if the time pressure becomes too much.

Tomorrow I will make it to Manning Park (66 km) at least but depending on how I feel I might try to push on to Princeton (122 km). I would like to make it to Princeton because I called Manning today and they said that it is still occasionally getting down to -10 degrees at night!

So far the gear I am wearing has been Ok. Gortex cycling jacket over windbreaker over jersey. Rain pants over cycling tights over shorts. The only problem is that my pants do allow some moisture to seep through and I still get wet. I am going to have to scotch-guard them when I get the chance. Well it is now 9:20pm, time for bed.

Day 4. May 19, 1999. Distance 70 km. Total 234 km. 9.5 hrs. Manning Park

Title 1: Hiking and Biking

Title 2: To Hell (see May 20 for the "and Back")

Today was an absolutely exhausting day. I have never had to work so hard in my entire life. I had to do two enormous climbs today. The first was from Hope (elevation 42 m) to the Hope slide (elevation 740 m) and this was over about 10-15 km. I then coasted down the other side and the real work began! For the next 40 km I climbed and climbed and climbed. Who put all those mountains there!?! I can't recall how many times I have passed through the park and not realized that the whole route is just one big hill climbing up to Allison Pass at 1342 m!!! I would say that out of the day, 60 out of the 70 km were all uphill. Since it only took me 10 min to go that 10 km that means I climbed for 9 hours and 20 min. By the end of the day I would walk for 5 min then bike for 2 min before my legs would start to cramp and I would have to walk some more. My legs were really tired at the start today (residual from yesterday) so I am somewhat worried about them for tomorrow as I worked 3X harder than yesterday.

I have not been sleeping well since I have left, surprising considering the exercise I am getting. I also NEED a shower! 2 days and 164 km, my feet are ripe! Well since I didn't did not get to camp till 8:00pm today it is now 10:20pm and time for bed.

Day 5. May 20, 1999. Distance 95 km. Total 329 km. 9.5 hrs. Bromely Rock

Title 1: And back (see May 19)

Title 2: The bad day which turned to a good day

It is now 10:45pm as I am writing this. After talking with several people (everyone I meet seem to be Germans on vacation) it seems that the hardest part of my whole trip is behind me now. I woke up this morning feeling better than I thought I would, my legs were somewhat sore but it could have been worse. I should sell a How To Get Fit book, simply get on bike in Vancouver and start pedaling ;-). I stopped in at the Resort for a big pancake breakfast then coasted downhill for about 18 km (losing hard earned altitude all the way) then the climbing started again! Apparently there is another mountain that I did not know about so I had to climb for another 20 km to the top of Sunday summit (1284 m). Stupid, useless touring guide (The Canadian Cycling Associations Guide to Bicycle Touring in Canada). Again I had to struggle for every single meter. Didn't the

road engineers think about going around the mountains? The whole time my legs were just screaming for relief. I was exhausted both physically and mentally. I knew that if my mind gave up on me my legs would quickly follow. I started chanting the old army standard "left, left, left, right, left", pushing against the pedals with all my might. Yet once I made it over Sunday summit, the climbing still wasn't over! I coasted downhill for ~10 km then started climbing back up to the top of the Mine Hill outside Princeton. Another little detail that the book left out. I really flew down that Hill though, you haven't truly lived until you have hit 67 kph on a fully loaded bicycle! At the bottom guess what? Yep, more climbing (sigh). This time it was not so bad, neither as steep or as long as before. I finally got to Princeton at 5:00 pm, 6.5 hrs and 70 km after I started. The person at the tourist center said that what I just did was harder than even the route I will be going through the Rockies. Let me tell you, I nearly did my little victory dance when she said that from here to Keremeos it was all downhill and then just rolling hills through the Okanogan. Just for the joy of bicycling downhill (and looking for a place to camp) I biked for another 25 km to the provincial campsite at Bromely Rock.

Since this computer is \$5/hr I am going to quite now and fill in the rest later.

Headlines coming up next:

"Germans ignore warning-signs and feed famished bicyclist."

Day 5, Part 2: Germans Ignore Park Regulations and Feed Famished Bicyclist

Not feeling like eating alone I invited myself to dinner with my neighboring campers. They in their huge 28 ft motor home and me with my tent, it was quite a juxtaposition. They were a nice German couple here on vacation for 2 weeks and had driven here from Vancouver in one day, doing in five hours what took me 4 days! Oh well, I know that I have seen and experienced much more than they have. During dinner I explained that as a result of all the exercise my appetite had increased a great deal. They watched in amazement as skinny little me (6' 4" – 145 lbs) killed off 3/4 of a loaf of french bread, a package of sliced meat, and three apples. As I was starting to slow down due to a lack of food to eat, they generously donated two delicious barbecued sausages to try to fill my bottomless pit of a stomach. As we were talking they explained that they owned a small business in Germany and that this was their first vacation in five years. It seemed to me that their experience in Canada was becoming a life changing one. The theme continuously coming up in the conversation was their need to slow down and enjoy life, not to continuously rush on, running a race where there are no winners. Do I detect bicycle tourists in the making? ;-)

Now to explain why I am paying \$12 in a provincial campsite instead of camping for free. I did try to knock on some farm houses to ask if I could sleep in their yard but I could not even get to the door. Nothing keeps unwanted visitors away like 100 lbs of snarling barking farm dog. Yikes! I just try to keep my bike between me and the dog and back slowly away while talking softly to the dog. "Yes, this is your property." "Your doing a good job protecting it." "Please don't eat me. I am leaving now." I think that they can understand me or at least my tone of voice. They sure do know who holds the position of power in the situation, and it certainly is not me. I do have a can a bear spray but I don't think that the farmers would be too impressed me pepper spraying their dogs on their own property. Visions of buckshot coming my way keeps me cautious.

Well I am absolutely beat so I am going to go to bed now. Oops wait, one more thing. Today I had my first outdoor bath. After 3 days and nearly 250 km even I could not stand to spend a night in my tent with my feet. Ewww.... So I slipped on my swim trunks and hopped into the river. Boy it was cold!!! When I came out I made sure to make a show of it to another group of Germans (see they are everywhere) and said that it was better than being stinky. We all laughed as they mimed that NO WAY would they go in there, they would rather smell. Ha! I guess they just grow them tougher here in Canada. Bicycle across mountains with 60 lbs of gear on your bike, swim in frozen rivers, eat three times what a normal person eats. They are all going to go back to Germany with stories about how tough these crazy Canucks are.

Day 6. May 21, 1999. 52 km. Total 381 km. 4 hrs. Keremeos
A day with the wagon smith

Today I took most of the day off to try and recuperate from the Manning Park endurance test. My legs are quite sore and there is no energy in them at all. I guess it is true that you have about 3 days of energy stored in your muscles and I have used them up. My body now has to get really efficient at getting energy from food and burning fat to fuel my muscles. From Bromely Rock I made my way down the highway through Hedley to Keremeos. It was a nice gentle descent the whole way through the most beautiful country. The land is becoming more arid and dry, with large open spaces of grasses and pine trees. The road had a good shoulder the whole way and followed the winding Similkameen river with large rocky hills flanking both sides.

I met my first bicycle tourist today just outside Hedley. He was a young guy about my age who is traveling from Vancouver to the Rockies. He was shocked that I was going all the way to Newfoundland. Like they say, no matter how crazy you think you are there is always someone going further. When I asked him what he thought about Manning Park he just looked at me, I don't think that English was his first language, but when I mimed climbing, descending, climbing, descending his eyes widened with recognition and he emphatically stated "I hate Manning Park!". That about sums up my opinion on bicycling through Manning as well.

I pulled into Keremeos around 2:30 in the afternoon and started looking for a place to stay. As I was coming into town I saw a really neat place along the highway. It was a shop that had a whole bunch of old western carriages and wagons in various states of repair and construction. Since I was in no hurry I pulled in to take a look. The shop is called Carriage N Works and the owner is Glen Pegg. Glen is a really interesting character. He is a wagon smith and has been building and restoring carriages for over twenty years. The shop looks just like I imagine an authentic western one would look like a hundred years ago (minus the power tools of course), with tools and wagon wheels and parts all over and Glen looks like an authentic western smith as well. Jeans, cowboy hat, rugged looks. He was also working on building the body for an old Model A truck. Anyway, we got to talking and he offered his back yard for me to camp in. Of course I accepted!

Right now I am writing this by my tent under a spreading pine. I can look out 100 yards over the river and see an old covered bridge (the Red Bridge) which was built in 1907 for the railway. When I get my pictures developed I will be posting shots of some of Glen's work but if you would like to talk to him his number is (250) 499-7738.

Well again it is getting late. Hopefully tomorrow my legs will be better so I can cover some good distance. This is Trevor Hennessey in Keremeos, signing off.

Day 7. May 22, 1999. 59 km. Total 440 km. 6 hrs. Osoyoos
Rolling hills = sum(lots of little climbs) = one tiring day

Woke up this morning and my legs were not really sore anymore, just stiff and I still do not have any energy. I think my subconscious was aware of the stiffness in my legs because I sure had some weird bicycling related dreams last night.

I woke up at 8:00 this morning, chatted with Glen a bit and headed off. The ride today was pretty tough because my legs are still quite fatigued from Manning Park. The road from Keremeos to Osoyoos is very scenic but quite challenging, at least for me in my condition right now. There are large rolling hills for most of the length, 1 km up a good grade then down the other side, then up, then down, over and over again. I found that I had to get off an push every once and a while because my legs just could not do it. The heat was quite bad in the valley, high 20's, and between the heat and the hills I was getting pretty tired. The last climb up Richter

Pass just about did me in. But I pushed on and descended into Osoyoos around 3:30 and found a gentleman on the outskirts of town who would let me camp in his yard. I went into town and had a bath in the lake and got some groceries.

As I have not done so yet I will describe my average day. I usually wake up around 7 or 8 and start packing my bike. The packing always seems to take much longer than it should, between 1-1.5 hrs to get everything organized and packed on my bike. During this time I make a breakfast (cereal, bagels, fruit, all of the above) or head into town for pancakes. I have been tending to eat out only once a day and make all my other meals to try to keep costs down. (Trevor's TIP: When eating out be sure to grab all the bicyclist sized food items you can. By this I mean salt, pepper, ketchup and mustard packets, those small containers of butter and jam, ect. They really come in handy without having to carry large portions and they are FREE). I am then on the road by 10:30 although I am trying to get going earlier. I bike for 7 or more hours with the goal of ending the day in a town around dinnertime where I can buy food for the next day and find a place to sleep. On the road I tend to stop every hour or so to eat the groceries I bought the day before to keep my energy up.

Once in town I start looking for a place to stay. I HATE paying camping fees, I would much rather spend the money on food. So I head to the outskirts of town and start knocking on doors asking if I can pitch my tent in their yard. Gotta watch out for farm dogs!! They are kings of their domain and do not like visitors period, especially those on bicycles. I never know if they are truly vicious or just acting, I hope never to find out.

Once I have a place to stay I pitch my tent, drop off a bunch of gear and head into town for a shower/swim and groceries. Some towns have public showers, others have pay showers in laundromats, or here in Osoyoos I just jumped in the lake. For groceries, I buy enough for dinner, breakfast and lunch plus snacks. Today I spent \$7 and bought a loaf of Rye bread, a package of sliced ham, a tomato, 3 apples and 3 bagels. For dinner I made 3 huge ham and tomato sandwiches (using ketchup and mustard from 7-11), ate two and saved one for lunch tomorrow. I also ate an apple, one of the bagels and a bunch of jujubes I bought yesterday (\$2.80 per Kilo, YUM!). For breakfast I will have the two bagels with jam I got from breakfast in Manning and for lunch I will have the extra sandwich, the two remaining apples and some chocolate bars. Not bad eh? Three good meals for under \$10.

Trevor's Tips for Camping:

First some things you need to remember. People have every right to say no, so be polite if you are turned down. I have yet to have to ask at more than two places. I am sure to leave nothing behind except thank-you's and a flattened circle of grass. I also get their mailing address so I can mail them a postcard, I figure a 46 cent stamp and 25 cent postcard is the least I can do for the people kind enough to let me stay at their place.

My impressions on what works for getting people to say yes.

- 1) Try to get there before dinner-time (6:00). After that people tend to go out or start to wind down and don't want the interruption.
- 2) Look as normal as possible
 - I make sure I am clean shaven with a bandanna on to hid the messy/sweaty hair
 - I remove my helmet and reflective sunglasses.
 - I am sure to smile and start off friendly
- 3) Explain clearly what you would like.
 - I generally say the following

"Hi there, my name is Trevor and I am bicycling from Vancouver to Newfoundland this summer. I was wondering if I could pitch my tent in your yard for the night and I will be gone come morning."

Once they say yes I make sure to strike up a bit of a conversation with them about my journey to get them comfortable with me sleeping in their yard. I will also ask if they have a hose where I can wash up (Hint, hint, warm shower?) or if I am feeling particularly bold and they look receptive I will ask if they would mind if I could use their washroom to have a shower and clean up.

Well enough for now. I have to climb Anarchist Mountain tomorrow, 1000 m over 31 km, so I need to get a good sleep and start before the heat of the day hits.

**Day 8. May 23, 1999. 55 km. Total 495 km. 5 hrs. Rock Creek
A day of bike problems and another psychotic climb**

The day started off beautiful, clear and crisp, little did I know what was in store for me. I should have stayed in bed.

I woke up early and was on the road by 9:00 with the hopes of getting over Anarchist Mountain before the heat of the day and perhaps reaching Grand Forks (~135 km) today. Neither of these were to happen. On my way out of town I dropped into a bike shop to get my rear wheel trued up (straitened), usually a 10 minute job. Instead, I discovered that my freehub seal had broken and had let in the rain during the previous Monday. The bearings on one side had then overheated and lost their temper. They were grinding so bad it sounded like someone had poured sand in there. The mechanic had nearly completed replacing the bearings and repacking the hub when I asked if this was likely to happen again. He said that with the seal gone it was likely that it would. I told him again that I still had over 7000 km to go and that I was very likely going to run into rain at some point so he should replace the entire freehub (something I feel he should have mentioned from the start). He could not find the exact same part so he tried one that was close then it took 4 hours of fiddling before we discovered that it would not fit properly. Then lo and behold he looked around a little more and found exact same part as mine (wish that happened at the start). Of course the cap of the hub he just put on was plastic with poor grooves so it took another hour and a bunch of hammering to get it off my wheel so I could get the other one put on. To make a long, frustrating, story short 6 hours and \$82 later I was back on the road. It was now 3:00 pm and 28 degrees in the shade, CRAP!!! I did not want to stay in town for another day so I slapped on some more sunscreen and started climbing, and climbing, and climbing. The sun was beating down, the rays cutting into the back of my neck like a laser. It felt like I was in a blast furnace. Sweat was pouring down my face, dripping through my eyebrows, burning my eyes and making it difficult to see. I set my timer so I would remember to drink a cup of water every 15 min to prevent dehydration and heat exhaustion but man was I tired. I really lost it at one point, and just screamed with tears of frustration blurring my eyes. It was not a fun experience at all. In total it took me 3.5 hrs to climb to the summit, 31 km from Osoyoos and by then my already tired legs were screaming with fatigue. I was hot, tired, and mad about my problems in Osoyoos. Fortunately, the next 25 km to Rock Creek was essentially one big descent so I made it to town without any more difficulty.

Up to this point I was not a happy cyclist. My heart was heavy, spirit broken and body toast. My 135 km day had turned into 55 km, I was out \$82 and had lost confidence in my bike. To top it all off I was worried again about getting to Calgary on time and had decided that if I am still under time pressure in 7 days, I will start hitch-hiking up the passes. This upsets me a great deal, I want to bike it all the myself and this just seems too much like giving up and wimping out. But if I have no other choice....

God must have known how I was feeling because my spirits were restored at dinnertime when I was reminded the real reason why I was bicycling. It is not to simply cover X numbers of kilometers every day but instead it is to see the sights and meet the people of the Canadian countryside. At the cafe I asked three young ladies if I might join them for dinner as I could really use some company after the day I had and at this point I would

really hate to eat alone. I think that God put these girls there just for me. They were from the surrounding area and were just passing through town on their way home from a Christian concert. We chatted about my trip and life in the area. Then when they were leaving the waiter came up and told me that my meal had been paid for!!!! Thank-you so much girls. Your simple gesture came at a time were I was hitting rock bottom and you lifted my spirit. We met as strangers but I hope now to count you as friends. Bless you.

I am feeling much better now and hope to make it the rest of the way to Grand Forks tomorrow (~75km).

Day 9. May 24, 1999. 98 km. Total 593 km. 8 hrs. Christina Lake

A really hot day

I woke up at first light today feeling much better than yesterday. I think my body has now pretty much adjusted to the demands that I am placing upon it. My legs were slightly tired but not sore or stiff which is surprising considering the workout I had yesterday. This morning I ate at "Me and My Moms Cafe" just outside of town. Highly recommended for bicyclists! Good food, large portions, and CHEAP! 3 big pancakes for \$3.

From Rock Creek the road is rolling with ~10 km climb up Eholt Mountain (elevation 1000 m) but it was not that bad. I met two kids who had a flat tire at the top of the hill so I got their name so I could call their parents when I got to Grand Forks. From the summit I descended 17 km into town but because of a headwind I had to pedal downhill, I hate it when that happens! Work to get up the hill then work to get down, yuck! Today was even hotter than yesterday, when I pulled into Grand Forks around 4:30 I checked a thermometer and it was 35 degrees in the shade! A real oven and the main course was roast Trevor. I was really craving pasta and when I asked around the only place that was recommended was Mama Mitri's in Christina Lake another 20 km further down the road. On the way out of town when I stopped in at a motel to call those kids parents the woman at the counter recognized the name and number and asked me what had happened. I told her that it was only a flat and then when I called their parents the kids were already there. In the time it took me to get to the bottom of the hill they had already walked to a friends place and gotten a ride home! I chatted with the lady for a bit and I guess because I tried to help out those kids she offered me a free room for the night. I was tempted with the idea of a bed and a hot shower but decided that since tomorrow I had to climb Paulson Mountain (1500 m) I would like to do the 20 km to the base tonight. I thanked her and pushed on.

The road to Christina Lake descends most of the way from Grand Forks with a few little hills and a long descent at the end but an ever-present headwind was still blowing so riding was still a struggle. I arrived in Christina Lake an hour and fifteen minutes later and sat down for a good meal. Mama Mitri's was perhaps slightly on the expensive side but their special was reasonable and the portions were bicyclist size so I would eat there again.

The weather today was really hot but I have found a good technique to deal with it. Every time I pass a creek I soak my jersey, bandanna, and light windbreaker jacket. It stays wet and cool for 30 min or so and then I try to repeat the process. I make sure I drink a lot of water to prevent dehydration, more than 6 L today alone!

I am writing this during dinner so I have to go now and find a place to sleep. Cya.

Day 10. May 25, 1999. ~115 km (35 hitch). Total 708 km. 10.5 hrs.

Crescent Valley

The hill from hell.

Tonight I am staying in the most gorgeous valley I have ever seen, just outside the town of Crescent Valley. As I write this, the full moon is shining brilliant silver through the top of my tent as it migrates along the valley ridge, the stars are burning brightly and the crickets are chirping in the background. You can't pay for a campsite like this!

Today was another difficult day that ended well but before I elaborate I will start off with the road report. From Christina Lake the road descends for ~6 km and then climbs a difficult 35 km to the summit at 1500 m. From the summit there is a 35 km descent into Castlegar. Between Christina Lake and Castlegar is just one big mountain! From Castlegar to Crescent Valley (~20 km) the road descends most of the way. The mountain is really strange at parts. There are places where an optical illusion would occur where I would swear that the road was downhill but I still had to pedal and if I just stood there I would roll backwards. This was just about too much for my poor, fatigued mind. It kept expecting an easy descent but I would have to climb instead. I have noticed that when my mind gives up my body is quick to follow so I tried to keep my eyes glued on the road 5 feet in front of me and continued to crank on the pedals. After climbing for 20 km I began to hear a new noise from my bike. As all you car drivers know, new noises are never good news. I have gotten pretty good at diagnosing them now, loose straps, shoelaces hitting the frame, creaking cleats, but this time I could not find what was making the noise except that it was coming from near my cranks. The noise got worse so I ended up stopping and sticking out my thumb, hoping to get a lift to the next town to get my cranks/bottom bracket checked out. A fellow in a truck stopped and gave me a 15 km lift to the summit where he was scouting for bear. I felt like I was cheating a bit but with the memory of burned out bearings in my freehub fresh in my mind I just did not care. I flew down the other side, it was just one big 40 km long hill, really nice.

I pulled into Castlegar around 1:30 and headed to a bike shop. The mechanic diagnosed it as loose cranks. These are the arms that attach the pedals to the front chainrings and with all the climbing they must have loosened. While the bike was up on the rack I checked out my rear rim and nearly fainted when I saw it. I have been watching it since Vancouver because ever since I had it built the rim was slightly deformed, pulled out, by the spokes. This did not look right to me but when I asked the mechanic who did my tune-up in Vancouver, he said that there was no problem and that the wheel would last for 1000's of km yet. Well when I looked at it in Castlegar, all those little bumps were gone and in their place were small hairline cracks radiating from the spoke holes. I had just come barreling down a mountain at over 50 kph with 60 lbs of gear and a wheel that was ready to fail at any moment. I shudder to think what could have happened if I had hit a good bump and the rear wheel completely gave out. Can you say road pancake boys and girls?

To be Continued: How much did our hero have to spend? Were there more problems to be had in the near future? Stay tuned for next time. Same bike time, same bike channel.

Continued

There was no way that I was going to continue riding on that dead wheel so I asked what he had to replace it. Of course he did not have any 27" wheels built so we tried putting on a 700c wheel (smaller diameter) and moving the breaks down. Unfortunately, the only moderate quality wheel he had built up was a 32 spoke, double walled, racing wheel. Since I did not want to fart around town for another day I decided to take it and get on my way. I had to buy a new tire in that size to fit it so when all was said and done I was out \$250, OUCH! Perhaps I should have just bought a new bike before leaving? I grabbed a quick bite to eat then continued on to Crescent Valley.

I am so unbelievably tired that I hope this is making sense. Tomorrow I plan on hitchhiking my way to Revelstoke. I have done a realistic appraisal and have determined that at the rate I am going I can't make it to Calgary in seven days if I have to bike the whole way. If I can get all the way to Revelstoke tomorrow I think that I should be able to make it. <SIGH> Oh well, I guess I am redefining bicycle touring to moving by feet (pushing), legs (biking), or by thumb (hitchhiking), all with a fully loaded bike. The purists (is there such a thing as a bicycle tourist purist?) may not agree but they don't have 700 km of MOUNTAINOUS terrain to cover in seven days to catch a flight.

Day 11. May 26, 1999. ~105 km (35 hitch). Total 813 km. 10 hrs. Nakusp

Title 1: Pushing onward - Rural hospitality is a myth.

Title 2: A decision is made - two choices.

I am so bushed I am just going to whip this report off.

Road report: Rolling hills to Slocan. From Slocan the road is winding and climbs for some distance, no shoulders in places. Pretty narrow so I would not want to be riding it in tourist season. Descend 8 km in the town of Silverton. Road is fairly level to New Denver. Met a nice bike mechanic in New Denver (Rob Farrel - WOC Cycle), I would recommend him. The road loses its shoulder and is rolling out to the town of Hills with an upward trend to the grade. From Hills to Nakusp the road has a decent shoulder and is level for much of the way with a long descent near the end. The area after New Denver is VERY isolated, if you come this way be prepared!

I had my first flats of the trip today, 3 of them!!! All were on the new rear wheel. After the third flat I had just about had it with my bike. I had just blown \$300 and now this! I am sure you know the kind of mood I was in, feeling like punching holes in walls and kicking in doors. I was losing my mind and threw a little tantrum by the side of the road. It was all becoming too much for me. The long distances without adequate rest, the worries about getting to Calgary on time, and now problem after problem with my bike. To top it all off no one would stop to pick me up hitchhiking! I had all my bags off my bike, one wheel off and my thumb out, looking quite desperate and yet no one would stop. Where is this fabled rural hospitality? I know all those guys (single occupants) with empty pickup trucks had to be locals but they just blew on by. I mean come on, how many psycho serial murders are dressed in a bright yellow cycling jersey trying to thumb a ride in the middle of nowhere with 40 lbs of camping gear and a bike?!? My only rides of the day were obtained at gas stations where I was actually able to talk to the person and they could see I was a normal person.

It is of my opinion that the myth of rural hospitality is just that, a myth. Or perhaps rural people are more friendly to their neighbors than city people but are different to outsiders. Sure, I have met and slept at the places of some fabulous people but I have been selective, only picking places that look friendly and well maintained. I would bet you anything that if I looked for a well maintained house and yard in the suburbs of Surrey or Vancouver and said I had bicycled from Newfoundland and needed a place to stay, they would let me camp in their yard. It is not the location where a person lives that makes them friendly but instead it is the person themselves. I might just be feeling a bit jaded from my experiences today but right now that is how I feel.

Anyhow, when I realized that I was really starting to get angry I knew that I needed a break to calm down and put things in perspective so I stopped in Slocan to have lunch. While I was eating I disassembled the rear wheel and wiped the rim, the tube, and the inside of the tire with a damp napkin to try and remove whatever was causing all those flats. Seems to have worked as I have not gotten any more flats during the rest of the day. Again, this is something I think the mechanic should have done when he put the tire on the wheel.

I have decided that I can't deal with the uncertainty around my bikes reliability. In Calgary I am going to get an all new group set put on and have new wheels built up, hopefully for under \$900. I will keep the handlebars/stem, frame, seat/seatpost, racks, fenders and pedals but everything else will go. I could probably make due with replacing a part here and a part there but with >7000 km to go I will just pay up front for piece of mind during the remainder of the trip.

I have 6 days and 500 km to go. Tomorrow I am going to try to hitchhike to Revelstoke to get the Bob trailer I have called ahead and ordered from Castlegar. It is a cool little trailer that hooks up to a special skewer through the rear axle and this should allow me to get all this weight off of my bike and hopefully reduce the number of

problems I am having. Then I will chose to do one of two things: I will either hitchhike from Revelstoke to Lake Louise and continue bicycling to Calgary from there or I will just rent a car in Revelstoke and drive all the way to Calgary. I have resigned myself to my fate. I don't feel too bad about not cycling the whole way. I have still covered 750 km in 10 days and will still be doing 7000 km more before the trip is over. With the bike problems and time pressure I just don't have a choice in the matter. I can always come back and bike from Revelstoke to Calgary at another date.

**Day 12. May 27, 1999. ~145 km (95 hitch). Total 958 km. 15 hrs. Albert Canyon.
A decision is made - a third option!**

I woke up at 5:00 am this morning to try and catch a ride with someone who commutes to Revelstoke. After an hour someone finally someone stopped and offered me a lift. I will call him Bud (short for Budweiser) and the less said about him the better. I probably made a bad judgment call continuing riding with him (thought he was drinking a Coke when he picked me up, WRONG!) but I guess with the state my mind was in at the time I was not thinking straight. Yep, he finishes the can he is drinking from, reaches behind to a cooler and pulls out another beer. A what? OH CRAP THIS GUY IS DRINKING!!! Here it is 6:00 am in the morning and this guy is on his second beer already (well second with me in the truck anyways). He finishes the second beer, tosses the can in the back and asks me to grab him another. Oh no! What do I do now? What a nightmare, here I am 30 km outside of town in the middle of wilderness and the Revelstoke is still 65 km away. I figured that since this guy is drinking so early that he must do it frequently and therefore have somewhat of a tolerance built up. I gingerly handed him the third beer and told myself that if he goes for a fourth that I was going to get him to pull over .and let me out. He downed the third beer and said, "Well that's enough for me for now, have to wait till I get there before I have anymore." Wonderful, a "'responsible" drunk driver. Oh well, I made it to Revelstoke in one piece and won't make the same mistake twice. I think it was because I was so desperate that I made that bad judgment call.

The road from Nakusp to Revelstoke is extremely isolated, 95 km of absolutely nothing but bush and a short ferry trip (no buildings at the ferry, you drive right onto the ship). It was hard to tell from the truck but it looked like we climbed rolling hills to Galena Bay and for some distance from Shelter Bay, then descended the rest of the way into Revelstoke.

I pulled into Revelstoke around 9:00 am and asked the first bicyclist I saw where the bike shop was. She told me that it was not open yet and in the course of our conversation I discovered that she too is bicycling from Vancouver to Newfoundland and that today is her rest day. Her name is Kati and she is from the US. Last year she did a supported tour across the USA but wanted to try REAL bicycle touring and so went North to go across Canada. It sounded like she ran into much of the same problems as I did with not being in REAL bicycle tourist shape although she has not had the bike problems that I have. I guess because she is traveling alone and is from the States she has not been camping but instead has been staying in hostels along the way. I tried to tell her that we Canadians are a pretty friendly bunch and if you are careful to pick the right places to camp you should not run into any difficulty. I would much rather spend my money on food.

I spent 3 hours in the bike shop getting the bugs worked out of the trailer (it could really use a center kickstand, parking the bike/trailer is a pain) and went for groceries. My bike did not feel much different although it was nice to get the panniers off the front wheel as I now have much better maneuverability. I am absolutely certain though that my bike can feel the difference, all that weight has now been moved to the trailer and the bike just has to pull it. When I told the mechanic about my plans to swap out all my components he took a look and said that they were all good and strong and that he would not do anything. FINALLY, SOME GOOD NEWS!!! As it was only 3:30 and with new-found confidence in my bike, I decided neither to hitchhike nor to rent a car but instead to push on under my own power. Calgary here I come!

I made it 35 km east of Revelstoke to a campground in Albert Canyon. If I was not so tired and REALLY wanting a long hot shower, I would have just pulled off the side of the road to camp because the campground was a total rip off. \$23 for a stupid campsite and you had to pay extra for the use of the hot springs! Oh wait, for \$23 I was allowed ONE free shower, oh goodie! I probably should have just continued on but I wimped out and stayed for the hot shower. I had just set up my tent when a train roared past on the tracks just 20 feet behind my site. I said to hell with that and packed up and moved to another campsite. I was also warned about a couple of bears that have been frequenting the area and that I should be careful with my food. With that in mind I hung my food high up in a tree and was feeling all cocky about how prepared I until I looked over and saw my German neighbors cooking their steaks over a fire. Wonderful, while they are sleeping all nice and snug encased in their steel cocoon of a motor home I have to play bear sandwich in my tent and sleeping bag when the hungry bears come around attracted by the fat in the fire.

Before I go to bed I just remembered something that happened in Castlegar. On my way out of town I met up with another bicycle tourist. He was standing outside of a laundromat with his bike and what caught my eye was the size of his panniers, I wish I took a picture. They were HUGE, the front ones looked to be about 50 liters EACH and the rear panniers were even larger! I found out that his name was Marco and that he is bicycling from Argentina to Alaska. I asked him how far he has come and he told me that he has been on the road for 2 years and 7 months! 31,000, yes thirty-one thousand kilometers. Yikes! I am guessing that he as looped the United States at least once during that time as he left Vancouver around the time that I did and Argentina is not all that far away.

While on the topic, here is another interesting cycling story I have heard a couple of times now from several different bike stores. There is a couple ahead of me who are traveling from Vancouver to Montreal on their 64 year old Raleigh tandem. Apparently they immigrated to Canada from Europe in 1949 with their baby and this bike. They got off the boat in Montreal, put their baby on the back and pedaled from Montreal to Vancouver! I can't even imagine what the roads through the mountains would have been like back then. This year is their 50th anniversary of the event and so with the support of a motorhome they are retracing their journey from West to East on the SAME BIKE! Wow, like I said earlier, no matter how great of a thing you are doing, there is always someone doing something better. I have heard that this couple has a website describing their trip so if any of you come across it could you e-mail me the address, I would love to get in contact with them.

**Day 13. May 28, 1999. 120 km. Total 1078 km. 10 hrs. Golden.
Walking. Errr. Biking on air.**

Today was an absolutely fantastic day! The sun was shining and I was bicycling through the most gorgeous country ever created. It was a long haul but with a nice tailwind most of the way it felt like I was flying through the mountains. For 28 km from Albert Canyon to the start of Rogers Pass it seemed to be mostly a slight downhill grade although that could be the tailwind talking. There was an 8 km climb to the summit of Rogers Pass but it was nothing compared to what I have done before. On the other side there is a totally killer descent for ~20 km. In places I was riding the brakes and still going over 60 kph! I would NOT want to climb the pass from the East! At the end of the decent/level ground there was a tough 9 km climb on the way out of Glacier National Park then there was intermittent climbing for some distance. I then descended to the Kicking Horse River and continued on level ground to Golden. At 5:30 pm a nice tailwind picked up and pushed me the rest of the way to Golden.

The scenery for most of the day was astounding. I am truly in the mountains now. Everywhere I look I see magnificent outcrops of rock and ice and snow, all towering upwards toward the sun. Tendrils of cloud clung to the peaks and with the sun behind them, they encircled the summits like brilliant silver halos. Breathtaking.

At the summit of Rogers Pass I met a bicycle tourist who was feeling like I did a few days ago. Her knee was really bothering her so she had boxed up her bike and was taking the Greyhound to Calgary and was thinking about catching a flight home to Ontario from there. She had been traveling with a partner from Vancouver until her knee gave out and he continued on. It sounded like the guy was really pushing it and wanted to cover the distance as fast as he could while she wanted to take her time and see the sights. Not a good combination for touring partners. I did my best to describe the state that I had been in a few days before, the fatigue and despair that I had felt and that now I was feeling better with a newfound strength and desire to press on. I told her that she should take a week in Calgary to recuperate and make her decision about continuing on from there. If you are reading this please e-mail me and let me know how you are doing. I hope that your knee recovered and that you decided to continue on.

I took some time at the summit to admire the mountains and eat lunch and then continued on. On my way down the other side I had my first drafting experience with a semi. Drafting is a term used to describe what occurs when cycling with teammates. One rider cycles in front and serves as a windbreak to those bicycling close behind. Well when you get one from a semi it is quite an experience. Here I was barreling down the mountain at 50 kph when the semi trailer passes me. As he goes by the blast of his passing nearly tossed me off the mountain, then I was yanked forward by the vacuums behind him. For 1 km I was racing close behind at nearly 70 kph until he pulled far enough ahead that I was subject again to wind resistance. The experience was quite exhilarating but I think that once is enough! I find that with the BOB trailer I now have an additional pivot point to worry about and I can get weird oscillations from passing cars if I am traveling faster than about 45 kph. Between Rogers Pass and the Kicking Horse River there were two good climbs but once I was on the straightaway with a good tailwind I really flew into Golden.

What a magnificent backdrop! There is a wall of mountains on the South side of the river that extends all the way to Golden and beyond. It is not just one mountain, from town I was able to distinguish 15 distinct peaks but they were all attached to form a wall that was about 3-4000 m high and ~50 km long. During the last ice age it must have formed a boundary, funneling the glaciers through the area which then scoured the ground to form the valley present today while leaving the mountain range raw and exposed.

I pulled into town around 8:00 Alberta time. I am in a new time zone! For dinner I bought some fried chicken and a slurpee from 7-11 then hit Overweighty for more food. In total I ate 2 pieces of fried chicken with 10 potato fingers, a 1 L slurpee, 4 doughnuts and three apples (before bed I ate another 2 doughnuts and 2 apples, like I said, my appetite is HUGE!).

While I was busy doing my best impression of a ravenous animal, I was joined by a local girl who stared in shock as I inhaled my meal. We got to talking and she offered her parents yard for me to pitch my tent in. I usually like to screen where I will sleep so I was somewhat hesitant but agreed to check it out. I went there and met her mother but her father did not come to see who was sleeping in his yard (weird thing #1) and I could smell alcohol in the house (weird thing #2). There were other little things that I will not go into here but it all added up to make me feel uncomfortable. My instincts were telling me that something did not feel right so I moved on. Always trust your gut feeling (except when it tells you that your compass is wrong but that is a different story ;-). As I biked down the road I saw a guy eating dinner on his porch with a fairly nice bike in his yard. I have found that cyclists tend to be sympathetic to my plight so I asked if I could sleep in his yard. He was renovating and did not have room but he thought that a friend might. I ended up spending the night in his friends yard, a wonderful young couple, after having a shower at the first fellows place. I ended staying and talking until midnight before heading back to my tent to sleep.

So far the BOB is working out great and I am regaining confidence in my bike.

Day 14. May 29, 1999. 62 km. Total 1140 km. 7.5 hrs. Field.

Title 1: Racing the storm. I win.

Title 2: A five star meal in the corner store.

Today was a pretty difficult day. My legs were somewhat tired from the long ride yesterday so I took my time getting ready in the morning and did not get on the road until 12:00. Big Mistake! When you have to go over mountain passes, always start out early in the morning before the wind picks up. Although the day started out clear with the wind from the West, by the time I left the wind was from the North-East and an angry black cloud was dumping rain about 15 km behind me. I said my characteristic "Oh Crap!" and started pedaling furiously. The highway from Golden to Yoho National Park was by far the worst stretch of road I have had the misfortune of bicycling on yet. In some places there was a decent shoulder but in others the shoulder was all torn up or nonexistent. The road was winding and to make matters worse you were bounded by either a rock face or a 500' drop to the river below. All the while the trucks would be flying by inches from my elbow.

From Golden there is a steep climb and then the road climbs intermittently for 20 km to Yoho National Park. Most of the climbs were in the 6% range but the last one is ~3.5 km long and is a 8% grade. I did get to fly down some good hills but even those were made unpleasant by the poor road conditions. The whole time I could see that black cloud with its sheets of rain chasing me.

After 20 km or so I entered Yoho National Park and lost the rain cloud. Here the road was mostly level with a nice large shoulder. This has to be my favorite parks so far, the mountains are spectacular and you cycle along a glacial green river for much of the journey. Unfortunately, even with the level road I was not given a break from my toil. The whole time I was in the park was spent fighting a brutal headwind that came rushing down the valleys to beat itself against by body and bike. Every single meter was a battle, grinding against the gears to crawl into the wind. I find that the wind is even worse than hills because at least with hills you know sooner or later you will reach the top and get to coast down, with the wind you never know if it will lighten up at all. To make matters even more frustrating, every once in a while it would start to rain so I would put on my rain-pants, boots and gloves but then it would stop raining and I would start to overheat and have to take them all off. Then a while later it would start to rain again and I would have to do it all over again. I can't take the risk of getting wet, with the wind-chill causing subzero temperatures and some distance to go, wet feet and knees would be murder so I just had to play mother natures game. I did reach an interesting state of mind that day though. The wind would be gusting and howling around me and I would be screaming back at it, howling like a banshee myself. Shouting, yelling, taunting the wind to do its worst, that I have come too far and gone through too much to be beaten or cowed now. Toss me the worst that you can mother nature, I'll kick your ass. With this attitude I forced my way into field around 8:00 with burning legs and a hoarse throat but with a triumphant feeling that I had persevered and fought my way through.

I arrived in town absolutely starving. I had no desire to cook and was craving a large, hot meal. Now you must understand that Field is a railway station town, I would guess that the population is 200 souls tops, and so when I was referred to the General Store for dinner I was not expecting much. To my astonishment and delight I discovered that it contained a quaint little restaurant called Truffle Pigs and I was served the BEST meal I have ever eaten in my entire life. Even in factoring in that I was absolutely starving they still beat out the meals I have had in the best restaurants in Vancouver and Montreal. If you ever pass by Field I would say that you have to stop in to try the food. The café is run by Sean (Chef), Jeni (Baker), and Michelle (Waitress extraordinaire). All ingredients are fresh and prepared on site. I had their special of the day and will have to e-mail them for the full description but essentially it was fresh pasta sautéed in white wine and spices, topped with a tomato based sauce and fresh cooked spiced sausage. It was absolutely outstanding, a real diamond in the rough. Apparently the local resorts and hotels even send their guests here to eat! If you are interested in contacting them, they can be reached at trufpigs@rockies.net.

After the fantastic meal I went in search of a place to pitch my tent. The first person I talked to suggested the local churchyard and so that is where I set up camp. I can't express in words the majesty of my surrounding that night. Field is surrounded on three sides by three massive mountains and I was camped right at the base of them all. The night was cool with temperatures close to freezing but I stood around a fire in a barbecue pit and chatted with the woman next door until late in the night. In the morning I awoke to an awe inspiring site, the rising sun was behind Mount Stephen, highlighting the mountain with a golden aura and turning the wisps of clouds at the peak into a blazing white halo. With that site impressed in my mind's eye and my spirit soaring, I packed up my gear and continued on my way.

During Day 15 I crossed into Alberta so I will post it in the Alberta section.

British Columbia Concluding Thoughts

First and foremost in my mind is the realization that you really can not train for an undertaking of this magnitude. When training I just did not load 50 lbs of gear on my bike and ride for 7 hours up and down every hill I could find. The best I could hope for was to have a good baseline conditioning so that I did not seriously hurt myself while I quickly got into touring shape. Although it was really hard initially, after a week on the road my legs were in shape and my appetite had grown large enough to provide enough fuel for my activities. My biggest advice would have to be DON'T LEAVE WITH A DEADLINE. You need time for rest, breakdowns (bike and/or body), and sightseeing. Having a deadline made it feel more like work than a vacation. All in all, British Columbia was an absolutely gorgeous trip, a fantastic adventure, and likely the most difficult portion of my cross-Canada trek.

(Here is a note written after I have completed the trip. I was wrong, you can and SHOULD train better for a trip like this. It will help you a great deal in avoiding some of the problems that I hit and make climbing the hills a great deal easier. See day 60 for a story about someone who trained properly and what he was able to do because of it.)

Alberta

Day 15. May 30, 1999. 120 km. Total 1260 km. 9 hrs. Canmore.

Title 1: Strangers into friends.

With my heart soaring from the splendor of the morning sunrise I flew all the way into Canmore. On the way out of Field I climbed my last mountain pass of this journey (Hurrah!) and in total the strenuous portions of the climb was only about 9 km long with the remaining portion fairly easy. Again, the scenery of Yoho National Park was breathtaking. The sights in combination with a gentle tailwind pushed me onward to Lake Louise, passing the Continental divide and the BC/Alberta border in the process. It's downhill (mostly) from here on!!! Yippee!

At Lake Louise I left Highway 1 and turned onto the Bow Valley Parkway to continue onto Banff. The Parkway had much less traffic than the TransCanada Hwy and was very scenic as well. The road did not have much of a shoulder but this was not a problem as traffic was so light. Perhaps during tourist season it might be a different matter. The road gently meandered through the park, going over some small hills along the way. I stopped along the way to watch two deer and an Elk browse. They were only 20 feet away and it was really fascinating to see them so close. I guess since they are in a National Park they have no fear of humans.

I have now noticed that my hill climbing technique has evolved and changed. Before I would just gear down and down until I was pedaling slowly in my lowest gear, then when even that became too much I would get off and push. Well now as I approach a hill I go to a higher gear and stand up to force my way uphill. Although this would likely not be sustainable on the really long climbs through the mountains it works well on these small hills I am traveling now. I can push on without losing too much momentum. I find that I reach a Zen like state, my legs pumping up and down, my body swaying side to side while my bike floats beneath me. In this state I can climb, and climb, and climb.

Boy oh boy, another aside. I sure do seem to have a lot of those. I guess it that it is because I am always writing this late at night and my mind just wanders. He he he I guess I did it again with that last sentence as well. Errr This one too. Ok, blabbering aside, back to the story. I pulled into Banff around 7:00 pm and cringed from what I saw. The best way I can describe Banff to those of you in Vancouver who have never been there would be to say that it is just one big Robson Street. Not any real character, just little trendy shop after little trendy shop and a mass of people crowding the sidewalks. I wanted to find a decent place to eat but I could not find any locals to ask! The streets were absolutely packed but they were all tourists and I could not ask anyone in the stores because they were simply students from all over working for the summer. In disgust I just ended up buying enough food at McDonalds to get me to Canmore

Back on Hwy 1 with a slight downhill grade and a good tailwind I covered the 20 km to Canmore in under half an hour. Trevor the speed demon.

While in Mission on Day 2, I met an older woman during dinner who told me her son had bicycled up to the Arctic circle and was now living in Canmore. She gave me his number and asked me to call him when I got to there. So after picking up some groceries from IGA and a Frosty from Wendy's (excellent cooling fluid for tired cyclists), I gave him a call. He told me that he was in a Condo so he did not have a yard that I could pitch my tent in but that he did have a spare room I could sleep in if I would like. Of course I accepted! The idea of not having to unpack everything and the chance to have a hot shower was exciting.

What a nice guy and family. He and his wife are both under 30 and they have a beautiful 3 year-old son and a 1 year-old daughter. We sat around until midnight, trading cycling stories over beers and food. Meeting great people like these restores ones faith in humanity, newspapers should be covering people like these instead of

murders and crime. He is a university grad who is working as a roofer to support his family while his wife (also a university grad) stays home to take care of the kids. I told her that being a stay at home mom is one of the most important jobs she could have chosen to do and that she has done a fantastic job. Both of their children are just amazing, dynamic little kids and I can see that they are flourishing under their love and guidance. For example, this morning the kid was flitting around the room and he comes up to me and says, "Butterflies drink nectar." Holy, moly that's quite an observation for a three year old. Right now the wind has picked up and it has started raining, I sure am glad to have a roof over my head. Well, it is now late and I have over a 100 km to go to Calgary tomorrow, err... today, so I am going to call it a night.

Day 16. May 31. 125 km. Total 1385 km. Calgary.

Title 1: I MADE IT!!!

Title 2: Man vs Nature. Nature wins.

I woke up this morning to a house full of the sounds and smells of life. Fresh coffee was brewing and the kids were playing in the living room. I had a leisurely breakfast, played with the kids a bit, and talked with Tan and Shelly for a while before heading out. My legs were still somewhat tired from yesterday but with a nice tailwind at my back the next 50 km just flew by. I left the mountains behind and entered the foothills of Alberta. Along the way I met a couple cycling the opposite direction but were stopped with bicycle problems. It seems that the fellow had broken his chain twice but did not have any spare links. I stopped and gave him some of mine and while talking I found out that they are from Holland and for their honeymoon they are cycling from Calgary to Kamloops via Jasper and then back to Calgary via Revelstoke. I wished them the best and gave them my e-mail address and they continued pushing on into the 40 kph+ headwind which up to now had been my tailwind. I remember thinking that I hope the wind gets better for them for their honeymoon. Well not more than 10 km down the road my wish came true. Unfortunately, like most wishes, the true consequences were not fully foreseen. Their new tailwind was now my headwind! DOH!!! This headwind would stay with me until Calgary.

I pushed on for 30 km to Cochrane where I called my friend in Calgary to let her know that with only 30 km to go I should be there in 2 hrs. I got her address and some directions but as it would turn out I really should have asked more questions but more on that later.

From Cochrane I had to climb a good hill ~3.5 km long to get out of the valley and at the summit I could see an approaching storm. It was a huge black mass of clouds coming from the Northwest following the Rockies and heading right for me. I could see the rain falling as a black sheet and lightning flashes were clearly obvious. I thought that since it was still at least 50 km away I would be able to beat it to Calgary where I could find shelter. As I am now in the habit of talking to the weather I gave it a piece of my mind, "You think your so tough don't you? All big and black and acting bad. Well your not going to catch me!". Big mistake taunting mother nature! It seemed to have heard me and with the storm rapidly bearing down on me I started sprinting for Calgary. The wind had become more of a crosswind, neither helping nor hindering, so going full out I was averaging 30 kph. With only 20 km to go to the city limits I thought that I could make it easily but I forgot one crucial thing. Cities are BIG and Calgary is definitely a city!!! You need to recall that for the last 14 days the biggest town I passed through was probably Revelstoke (pop ~10,000) which I could cross in 10 min. Well after 25 km of bicycling I hit the outskirts and as far as I could see was just urban sprawl! That's when it hit me, finding where my friend lives might not be as easy as I thought. I picked up a map of the city at a gas station and saw that she lived over 100 blocks (~20 km) away on the other side of town! Then at that very moment, nature took its revenge for my escape a few days earlier and for my continuous taunting. The first blast of wind nearly knocked me off my bike and the battle had begun. I am sure there were gusts of wind over 100 kph and they hit me like a sledgehammer! The wind was so strong, it felt like it did when I was in Edmonton in 1986 when a tornado struck. We just don't get storms like this in Vancouver so I was asking people on the street if there had been any tornado warnings. With adrenaline coursing through my veins and fear in my eyes, I started

out along the road recommended to me, the John Laurie. That was big mistake #2. This would have been a great direct road if I were in a car because it is an expressway!! Not suitable for cyclists at all. With visions of tornadoes dancing through my head I said to hell with it and took it anyway. With the enormous tailwind and adrenaline I was spinning at over 50 kph even up hills! After nearly 10 km on the road I had a close encounter with a truck and decided that being on this road was more hazardous than possible tornadoes so I went hunting for quieter roads. By now the storm had hit with full fury. The rain was falling in sheets making it hard to see, lightening was everywhere and the wind was tossing me around like a rag doll. After another 10 km of biking I arrived at the house, shaking like a leaf and badly in need of a warm drink, preferably an alcoholic one. I looked at my odometer and watch and realized that I had covered over 45 km in 1.5 hrs. That's when it hit me how much better shape I was in compared to when I had left home. I had just bicycled full out, giving 110%, for 45 km and 1.5hrs after already bicycling 80 km!

Well time to veg for a while then hit the sack.

Day 17. June 1. 0 km. Total 1385 km. Calgary
Ahhhh... Nothing to do!

All I did today was laze around and recuperate from the past 15 days on the road. I typed up more of my travel diary and because it was cheap night at the theater I went to see the Phantom Menace. Definitely worth the \$3 but it does not compare to the originals. I still get choked up hearing Chewbacca crying as Han Solo gets frozen.

Day 18. June 2. 0 km. Total 1385 km. Calgary
A bit of anxiety.

Two days left until I have to fly back to Vancouver to give the Valedictorian address to the student body at Convocation. Since I really have nothing written so far I am starting to have little anxiety attacks about it. I am not worried about actually giving the speech, I just would really like to have a speech to give ;-). I have to go work on it now.

Day 19. June 3. 0 km. Total 1385 km. Vancouver
Flight home

I wrote the bulk of my speech last night and spent today packing up all my gear so that I am ready to leave as soon as I get back on Sunday. My friends, roommates, mother (get that?) is coming to stay for a few days and she is uncomfortable having me stay here. What? Here I am, 23 years old and just graduated from University, a Christian, and bicycling across Canada, yet she does not trust me around her adult daughter?!? Give me a break! Oh well, never look a gift horse in the mouth, it was good of them to let me stay for the past few days so I will just pack up and move on.

I took a bus to the airport and caught my flight back home. With the time change I left Calgary at 4:10 pm and arrived in Vancouver at 4:30 pm. My parents were waiting at the airport for me with a suit that I quickly changed into and headed up to the University for a reception. The dinner lasted until 10:00 tonight and so I did not get home until 11:00. I still want to polish my speech and practice it a bit so I will be up for a while yet. No rest for the weary.

Day 20. June 4. 0 km. Total 1385 km. Vancouver

The Speech

I did not get to bed last night until 2:00 yet I woke up feeling fine this morning. It's funny but I am not nervous at all about talking today, I guess after spending two weeks asking complete strangers if I can sleep in their yards and use their showers, giving a speech is a piece of cake.

I arrived at school and found out that today's ceremony has over 700 graduates! Yipes. With a conservative estimate of 3 guests per person that would make for around 2800 people. We proceeded out through the grounds of the University to the convocation mall. The mountain was shrouded in fog and the procession being led by our world class bagpipe band made quite a scene. With everyone in their regalia and the pipes in the background, it could just as easily been the highlands of Scotland.

I sat on the stage in the front row with the Deans of the school and looking out over the crowd I could tell that even 2800 people was a low estimate. It looked like the graduates made up only 1/6th of everyone there which would mean that there was over 4000 people present. It sure was a lot of people but it seemed that this made talking even easier than talking to a small group. I think that once a crowd reaches a certain size and you can't distinguish individual people, it is like you are just talking to yourself. My speech went over really well, with laughter at all the right spots. Piece of cake.

I went home after the ceremony to a "family" gathering which turned out to be a surprise party of friends set up by my parents. Thanks Mom and Dad!

Here is a transcript of my speech for those of you interested:

When I was asked to address the student body at this convocation, with my reflections on the past years here at SFU, I felt somewhat overwhelmed with the task at hand. How does one concisely address what University truly means to us all? Although we come together from different faculties and diverse programs, I wanted to focus on those things at University which are common ties between us all. In the end, what I came up with was not the similarities between departments but rather, it was the attributes that belong to each and everyone of us as students. We all share the experience of sleepless nights cramming, the anxiety of waiting for laboratory results and the joy one feels when all the hard work pays off with a good mark. And yet there is more to it than this. I believe Theodore Roosevelt captured this idea best, when he said:

"The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood. Who strives valiantly, who errs and comes short. And again who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, and spends himself in a worthy cause. Who at the best, knows the triumph of high achievement; and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly. So that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat."

Each of us at one point, set as a goal to obtain a University education. Well we made it, four, five, six years or more, here we are. Older, more mature and with a fuller understanding of the world within which we live.

We have struggled and fought our way through difficult courses and trying times and today we are here to receive our prize for work well done, our diploma. But what we have started, does not end here. The challenge remains to set new, loftier goals.

For some it will be graduate or professional school. For others it will be to find challenging employment within their field of interest. Or perhaps there are physical challenges to overcome, to conquer mountains and oceans or to travel the world. All are admirable goals and yet I think we need to recognize that sometimes we will fall short. The experiments just will not work, our business may falter or fail. And yet, what President Roosevelt said all those years ago still rings true today. It is in the act of trying that we are made great. In our struggle we are made strong, and we become tempered by our experiences. When you aim for the stars and miss, you might just hit the moon. Well today we did not miss, our aim was true and we have reached our goal. Congratulations Graduates!

**Day 21. June 5. 0 km. Total 1385 km. Vancouver
Computer frustrations.**

I spent the whole day on the computer scanning in pictures and putting text up on my site. In total I took 11 rolls of film in BC alone! I thought that might have been overkill but looking over them I don't regret a single picture. The landscapes are beautiful and the memories are priceless. Every mountain had a different character so no two pictures are alike. However, I do think that my rate of picture taking will be much slower through the prairies. I have scanned in around 40 pictures and will be putting them up in galleries with comments as time permits. I think I should have booked an extra day at home because with the flight back to Calgary tomorrow I am running out of time fast.

**Day 22. June 6. 25 km. Total 1410 km. 1.25 hr Calgary
Late night cycling, NOT A HAPPY BICYCLIST!**

I have pretty much cooled off now but earlier tonight I was absolutely furious. I arrived in Calgary at 8:30 pm and my friend was kind enough to pick me up at the airport and drive me back to her place, I was still being evicted though. I had everything loaded on my bike at 9:20 and I headed out. This is much later than I like to be on the roads even though it really doesn't get to be dusk until around 10:00, I just don't feel very safe on these city roads. Looking at the map, I knew my relatives were at 150th st in the South East and I thought I was at 52nd st SE which would mean that I had 100 blocks to cover which should take me 30-45 min, not too bad. Well I was wrong, I started at 52nd st NE which meant that I had 200 blocks to cover, all at night!!! This did not improve my mood! To make matters worse, the map I had bought was outdated so some of the roads that once were through roads were now subdivision construction sites. In some cases I would have had to backtrack 4 km so I decided to just push on through the sites. Because of the recent rain the ground was just gumbo, that thick, sticky mud gets and clogs everywhere. Gumming up cleats and pedals and caking up between the fender and the tire this muck just covers everything. Needless to say this put me in an even worse mood. In Canmore I slept in a complete strangers house with their 3 year old son and 1 year old daughter and they trusted me but here I was kicked out, at the time I felt rather insulted and hurt.

Now I am feeling much better and am glad that I did leave. I arrived at my relatives at 10:40 pm that night and sat around talking with my cousins for an hour or so before heading to bed. I have not seen them for over 10 years to it was nice to get back in touch.

**Day 23. June 7. 0 km. Total 1410 km. Calgary
Relaxing, NO MORE DEADLINES!**

Today was just another day of lazing around. I typed up a bunch more of my diary and spent most of the day just catching up with my cousins who I have not seen in over 10 years. I am glad that I had to move because otherwise I probably would not have been by to see them. It all works out in the end. Have to go now, we are going out to a pub for cheap chicken wings. MMmmmmmm..... Cheap wings.....

**Day 24. June 8. 60 km. Total 1470 km. Calgary
Calgary cycling.**

Ohhhhhhhh..... I ate too many wings last night and I think it was those HOT ones that really did me in. I had a really crappy nights sleep with bizarre dreams that had to be brought on by the meal. I must be getting older, back in my teens I could eat double what I did and be unaffected. Oh, oh, I'm turning into a certified old fart already ;-).

Today I went out to do some errands and see the city. I biked to the bottom of the C-train (their light rail system) and took that up to downtown Calgary. The city is somewhat strangely designed. Each of their little suburb blocks (perhaps 2 km by 2 km square) is completely isolated from the neighboring ones except for one major artery. None of the small side streets connect! It seems to me that with all the rapid growth, the city is dealing with it by spreading outward with single family dwellings instead of going upward with apartments. The sprawl is unbelievable. They did have some foresight and saved all the land bordering the rivers and made it into parks with bicycle paths, however since I did not have a bicycle route map, getting around was difficult.

I went to Mountain Equipment Co-op and picked up a bike map and some more gear then went to check out the University. The campus seems nice but I could not find any computers to use to update my site.

Day 25. June 9. 146 km. Total 1616 km. Drumheller

Title 1: On the road again.

Title 2: Thunderstorms, pastel skies and heart attacks. The prairies are boring?

I can't tell you the number of people who keep telling me how boring the prairies are and how long and tedious bicycling across them will be. I keep telling them that it is different going across on bike but they just don't believe me so I will try to express the differences here.

The day started out beautiful, with brilliant blue skies and large, fluffy white clouds drifting slowly overhead. I took the 22X East out of Calgary for 20 km then turned North on Hwy 797. It was at this junction that I hit my first thunderstorm of the day. It was a big, black mass of cloud moving fast toward me. People in cars were likely not paying him a second thought but on my bike I was giving him plenty of attention. It really is something else watching these storms approach. The bulk of the storm looked like it was going to pass south of me so I pedaled north along the 797 as fast as I could. When the front of the storm hit and the wind started to toss me around like a twig, I decided to head for cover. I saw two guys working in a carport so I ducked in there to wait out the storm. I spent the next 45 min playing with their dog and talking about my trip until the storm blew over. During this time they kept telling me that I needed to get a motor on my bike or buy a motor cycle. The one guy could not even understand why I was even going up to Drumheller if my end goal was Newfoundland! They just could not grasp the fact that I am riding a bike BY CHOICE, and that my goal is to SEE Canada not just to go across it. Some people just don't get it.

Once the storm blew over I continued on my way. All along the road the songbirds were flitting and singing among the rushes and every once and a while I would have the start of my life when a duck would flush from 3 feet away, a real heart starter as this large, brown object comes bursting out of the grass with a thundering clatter. Just one more thing car drivers don't experience.

I pedaled along the 797 until it turned into Hwy 9, both roads were in good condition and Hwy 9 had a small shoulder. All the while I could see another storm building in the distance. These storms start out a pale blue haze on the horizon but as they approach they turn darker and darker until they loom huge and menacing overhead. At the absolute center of the storm, only visible as it passes right over you :(, the clouds bubble downward just like in the Ghostbusters movie, pretty freaky looking. It is hard to tell how fast a storm is moving so I pick a landmark about 7 km away and when that starts to look hazy (because of the rain) or the thunder takes about 7 seconds (~7km) to reach me, I start looking for shelter. This time it was a lone farmhouse about a 1/2 mile off of the Hwy. I guess I cut it a little close because I was being blown around pretty bad by the time I reached the barn. There was an older fellow just coming in from the field and he invited me in for a cup of tea. So that's how I escaped another storm, warm and snug in a farmhouse with a cup of tea and having a nice conversation with the couple. The gentleman did keep trying to talk me into buying a motorbike, another person who could not understand. They offered me their spare bedroom to spend the night but I really wanted to get to Drumheller today so I thanked them and pushed on. I reached Beiseker at 6:30 and stopped for groceries. I was tired and hungry having traveled 90 km so far but I still had 60 km to go so I took in a sugar injection. I ate 5 apple fritters, two pears and drank 1 L of Coke. Once that started to digest I rode the sugar rush to Drumheller.

The roads to Beiseker were all in pretty good shape and it was mostly flat. Hwy 9 from Beiseker to Drumheller is in poorer shape and the terrain is much more rolling. Because of the cracks I stayed off the shoulder much of the time and only rode on it when a car was passing which was not very frequently.

Does not look like there will be any more thunderstorms tonight and right now there is a fabulous sunset. Time for bed

Day 26. June 10. 45 km. Total 1661 km. East Coulee.

Title 1: Dinosaurs and Hoodoos in the Badlands.

Title 2: He shoots, he scores!

Absolutely gorgeous scenery today. This side trip to Drumheller was 150% worth coming out from Calgary. All those tourists staying on Hwy 1 have no idea what they are missing. How can I describe the Badlands? They are sort of like what you see in the Grand Canyon but on a smaller scale. The hills are all eroded into interesting shapes and the rock strata is clearly evident. I took it easy today, writing it off as a sightseeing day. I entered town around 10:30 and picked up some food from IGA. I then continued 6km along the dinosaur trail to the Royal Tyrrell Museum where I spent 3 hrs wandering around their collection. What an amazing museum! They essentially trace the history of the earth from formation to the present using fossils from the area and around the world. The exhibits are outstanding making this a must see location if you are ever in Alberta.

When I left the museum I could see yet another storm coming so I headed to the public library to wait it out. I spent 3 hrs in the Library trying to update my web page while two other storms blew over. I did not want to spend the night in Drumheller so I left for East Coulee and the Hoodoo rock formations. 7 km down the road I could see another storm approaching so I ducked into a coffee shop and within 45 min it had blown over. I sure do like being able to see them coming and getting out of their way unlike in the Rockies where you turn a corner only to have a rainstorm pounce upon you.

The Hoodoo rock formations were really interesting although much smaller than I expected. I envisioned 100 ft high structures but in fact they were really only about 15 feet or so tall. They were still really interesting to see, columns of soft sandstone rock weathered by wind and water and capped by a flat piece of tougher rock, they are sort of mushroom like. As I was looking at them a young guy pulled up and asked where I was going. I

told him and he said he was from Newfoundland himself and he gave me his parents address and phone number for me to get in touch with when I get there. I had heard that Mari timers were friendly but this clinched it for me.

I really scored an awesome place to stay tonight. I pulled into East Coulee around 8:30 and started looking for a place to camp. I found a great looking yard with a fantastic camping site (trees/out of wind/rain/sun) so I knocked on the door. The fellow who answered the door said that I could camp there but while I was unloading my gear he said that they had a spare room that I could use if I would like. Since it still looked like there could be one more storm tonight I accepted immediately. Woo Hoo!!! A hot shower AND a roof over my head! On the downside, he does have cats and right now I am feeling a little itchy, I hope they don't have fleas....

Day 27. June 11. 139 km. Total 1800 km. Brooks. 10 hrs.

10 km of Hwy 570 from East Coulee to Dorothy was in the process of being paved so the dirt road was a bit of a rough ride. From Dorothy there is a 3 km long climb to get out of the canyon and at the top you return to the prairies. I stayed on Hwy 570 then turned south on Hwy 36 to Brooks. Both of these roads were freshly paved and with a great shoulder, must be all that oil money I have been hearing about.

The entire ride today was extremely level so far and I am really enjoying the prairie scenery. One cool thing that happened today was that I saw my real FLAT section. On one part of Hwy 36 I could look 360 degrees around me and it looked like the horizon was cut with a razor. The transition from ground to sky was so sharp that my eye could not focus on it, it was simply too brilliant and my mind would not accept it. Along one section of road I heard a squawk and looking around I saw a fox chasing a pheasant through a dusty field, what a site! The dust kicking up behind the fox and the bird dodging left and right with the sun setting in the background. Today was also the first day that I have run out of food, all I had left was unsubstantial junk food. I now understand why the cyclists motto is "Eat before you are hungry, drink before you are thirsty". By the time you get hungry you are in serious trouble and it is already too late. When I pulled into Brooks I was so famished my legs were ready to give out. I inhaled a quick meal and went looking for a place to stay. In fact I ate so fast that I think I actually strained a muscle in my throat if that is possible. My neck is really sore when I swallow. That should teach me a lesson ☹

Day 28. June 12. 145 km. Total 1945km. Irvine.

Title 1: Home, home on the range. Where the deer and the antelope play.

Title 2: Simple pleasures for simple minds?

Last night I stayed with a guy who runs an apiary (bees) and this morning he sent me off with a jar of his honey, YUM! I had forgotten how good peanut butter and honey sandwiches are.

I saw my first antelope today, actually I saw five, as well as two deer. They were all really close to the road so I was able to get a good look at them. Most of them just stood there trying to figure out what exactly I was. I stayed on Hwy 1 the whole day since there really is no other direct route to Saskatchewan. It has a full 4 foot wide shoulder but I much prefer riding on the smaller country roads. Traffic would be much less and the views would be more scenic.

With the wind at my back and traveling in a straight line I have found that I now have time to think. I can keep a small part of my mind on the road while the rest is busy daydreaming or thinking. It was quite enjoyable, I was reviewing storylines of favorite books I had read, and analyzed goals and desires of mine. I also had plenty of opportunity for another of my simple pleasures (as the title refers to). I like mooing, neighing or baaing (whichever the situation calls for) at farm animals along the way. I just love how they look at me like I was a creature from another planet. As soon as they spot me they stare and try to figure out what exactly I am (they

pay no attention to cars). When I make animal noises at them it really throws them for a loop. Horses usually do nothing but sometimes they race me. Sheep and goats tend to stand around and talk back to me. Calves (young cows) usually look at me with a clueless look on their face and then spook as I pass by and start running away. I can usually get at least one cow out of a herd to start mooing at me which soon gets the whole herd going as those farther away try to find out what all the commotion is about. Bulls on the other hand are just plain stupid, their mind is solely consumed with eating and waiting to mate. Actually I have passed by a whole herd of young bulls and when I mooed at them they perked right up and started following me. I sped up and they started running after me. When I stopped they would all gather round right against the fence and stare at me like I was their god. They looked so foolish that I had to take their picture. I thought that perhaps the farmhand that usually feeds them might always wear something yellow and so when they saw my yellow jersey they thought I was him. However, when I related this story to a farmer I was staying with he just laughed and said, "Son, do you know what time of year it is? Those were young bulls, they weren't thinking about food!" Ahem, well yes, perhaps I will try to moo a little less sexily. ;-) See what all you car drivers are missing?

As I was approaching Medicine Hat I met up with another cyclist and we road together talking for 20 km or so. I placed him in his 40's but he will be retiring at 60 next year (see what regular cycling will do). He is an avid cycle tourist having bicycled throughout BC several times, around Asia, and he said he had been to Australia/New Zealand 4-5 times.

I am beat, will break 2000 km tomorrow, ~1/4 done.

Saskatchewan

Day 29. June 13. 88 km. Total 2033 km. Piapot. 11 hrs!
Saskatchewan Headwinds!

Today was a rough day. The wind has swapped around and it is now blowing right into my face. It just makes biking much harder and the heat did not help either. The longer I am on the road the more I realize that car drivers are useless as sources of road information. Saskatchewan is NOT flat!! I had to climb for 15 km from the Alberta border and the rest of the day was rolling hills. The sky here is amazing, I have never seen the sky such a dark, brilliant blue, and with the land all green from the rain I would have to say that the beauty of this country is comparable to my trek through the Rockies. Along the way I hooked up with two young guys who were touring as well. They had just graduated from Grade 12 and had bicycled from Regina to Vancouver and were now on the back home. They had left on April 31 and were actually snowed out on a couple of the passes. The rear tire of one of the guys was so worn that the tread was all gone and the tire liner was showing. They still had 400 km to go and were down to their last \$10. I did not think that that tire would last until Regina so I lent them \$20 just in case they needed to buy a replacement. I just figured that if I was in a similar situation I would want someone to do the same for me.

The water from the taps all along this route is undrinkable. It is really high in minerals and just gross. I ended up stopping in at a tourist info center at the Hwy 21 junction and filled up my water bottles from their bottled water fountain.

As the end of the day approached I realized that there was no way that I would be able to make it to the next fair sized town so I just pulled into the next place on the map, Piapot. This is a real live (dead?) ghost town. The entire population of the town could not be more than 30 people or so and all the buildings are just slowly rotting away. In looking for a place to stay I met up with a older fellow who said that I could sleep in his camper if I would like. I jumped at this opportunity since the mosquitoes were out of control, hundreds of them all trying to suck my blood.

I guess they don't get many visitors through this area because this old guy really went out of his way to show me the town and then we went over to another families place for coffee. Since I like meeting different people I accepted and boy oh boy was it ever an experience! This was a REAL pioneer family. They were pretty much completely self sufficient, with a greenhouse for vegetables and the husband hunted for much of the meat (he was a full status native Indian so there is no closed season on any animal for him). We were sitting around the table drinking tea when the conversation got around to hunting. It seems that he had just been out the day before bear hunting and had shot a good size black bear. He asked if we had ever seen one skinned out and when we said no he said that their carcass look very human (yes I know, a real pleasant thought). So he says to his wife "Honey go get those feet from the freezer". Did he just say what I thought he said? Yep, I heard right, she comes back into the dining room with the skinned bear paws and plunks them right down on the dinner-table. They were skeletal hands with the muscles and tendons still attached and yep, they sure do look like human hands. Well, I just continued calmly drinking my tea while these feet slowly defrosted in front of me. This stuff doesn't bother me much but the old guy was looking a little green around the gills. "Want to see the head?" he asks. "Honey go grab it". Oh oh, he's upping the ante. She comes back in and plunks this grinning bear skull in front of me, again on the bare table. It still had green alfalfa bits in it teeth. So here I am, out in the total boonies, drinking tea with 4 skinned feet and a grinning skull sitting in front of me, melting slowly on the dining room table. Yep, you just can't make up stories like this ;-).

We continued talking about stuff and when I told them about my plans to head south to Hwy 13 from Gull Lake they suggested that I continued on to Swift Current before turning south as the road was better. They also mentioned that if I wanted to see a real cowboy town (unlike Calgary which is a wannabee cow town) that I

should have gone to Maple Creek. They have real cowboys, 6"+ tall, cow S**T on their boots, the western bar mustache with waxed ends and a belt buckle that weighs more than them. He did warn that just like 100 years ago, it is a tough town so don't go to a bar looking for trouble (not usually a real problem with me). They also said that if I enjoyed the badlands around Drumheller, that there are even better ones along Hwy 18 near Estevan.

It was getting late and it seemed to me that this guy would talk for a couple more hours at least so I feigned a couple yawns and said that I had a long day tomorrow and that I should be heading to bed. So we headed off at 10:30 pm and I was nearly carried off by a swarm of mosquitoes on the way back to camp (good thing I had drunk a lot of tea to help weigh me down). In all I counted 38 bites from that walk alone, time for an itchy nights sleep.

Day 30. June 14. 136 km. Total 2169 km. Wymark. 11.5 hrs

Title 1: The one finger salute (no, not THAT one).

Title 2: Still not flat.

I am super tired tonight so I am going to be brief. I had a horrible nights sleep last night as the common theme to all my dreams was savage attacks by giant mosquitoes. Not conducive to a good nights rest by any means.

Today I also had to fight headwinds again, making climbing even the minor Saskatchewan hills challenging. To top things off, I ate at a truck stop last night and have been paying the consequences all day. Thank god for Pepto-Bismol and semi-frequent rest-stops with restroom facilities. GI distress at the best of times is no fun but on a bike it really sucks. I don't think I need to say anymore about that.

Compared to the secondary roads, Hwy 1 is a really crappy ride. Although there are huge shoulders and the road is in fair condition, the constant stream of cars and trucks flying by really takes away from the scenery (actually the scenery along the hwy is pretty boring itself). The difference was obvious since as soon as I got off the Trans-Canada at Swift Current the change was startling. Immediately the traffic dropped to nearly nothing and the scenery was stunning. I really like this part of Saskatchewan.

Tonight I am staying with a wonderful family just across the road from Wymark. As before it is a young family and they are treating me fabulously. I had a great shower, they gave me food and said that if I ever passed through again to be sure to stop by. Very nice folks.

Well it was a long day on the road so I am calling it quits.

Oh wait, one more thing. Going through BC I would quite frequently get honks of encouragement and waves but so far it is quite different on the prairies. Here the farming folk are more laid back and you have to be watching close to catch it. You need to look at the left hand of the driver, it will always be on the wheel and the index finger will raise slightly in a salute as they go by. If they are feeling particularly friendly you might get two fingers or even the whole hand raised. It took me a while to notice it, it was so subtle.

Day 31. June 15. 104 km. Total 2273 km. Kincaid. 9 hrs

Title 1: The plague of headwinds continue.

Title 2: Gravel showers and poor roads.

The fricken wind blows, and blows, and blows. It is blowing in the morning when you wake up and it only increases in ferocity as the day progresses. It whips up dust and debris from the side of the road and threatening to knock you off your bike and beat you down. I am so very, very tired.

To make matters worse the section of road I covered today was the most horrible that I have run into yet. Hwy 4 south from Wymark to Cadillac was quite cracked and the shoulder was unrideable but the traffic was so light that I could dodge all over the road to miss the worst of it. From Cadillac to Kincaid it got really bad. There were large cracks and the potholes could swallow cars whole, but by far the worst thing had to be the ruts. Like usual government and corporation short sidedness, I hear that they are closing down many of the small rural rail lines and grain elevators in the area. This means that the farmers must now transport their grain for longer distances over the roads to the elevators that are still open. So now these huge, heavy grain trucks are traveling long distances over roads not designed to carry that type of load. This causes a phenomena I like to call "the asphalt wave", in some places the trucks have caused ruts that are over a foot deep and the pavement has been displaced up and out the sides to form a foot high wave like wall and some of these waves even have little breakers on them! Insane! The cars must have a horrible time with them but I am able to make the most of my maneuverability to ride all over the road to find the smoothest sections. I think the car drivers complain much more because they can't avoid them like I can and since they are moving 10 times faster than me, they hit 10 times more potholes per minute than I do.

Even with the wind and the road the riding is still quite pleasant. The scenery along the road is beautiful, the drivers along Hwy 1 have no idea what they are missing. The landscape is one of beautiful lush green, rolling hills with the odd farmhouse and barn along the way. As in Alberta, there are no trees except those planted near farmhouses and then those are all short and stunted (must be this damm wind!)

I have also had the unpleasant experience of discovering how Saskatchewan patches their roads. They just put down a layer of tar over the cracks and holes, then pour 2 inches of gravel and small stones over it and leave it. The passing cars then compress this mess into a semi-smooth layer. Unfortunately, the problem with this is that whenever a car or truck goes over a patch of this, they kick up all the loose gravel and send it flying my way (ouch!). When a big rig goes by I have to duck my head so I don't get a face full of it while my arms and legs are assaulted by this stuff. Some of the rocks have hit hard enough to cause bruises and by the end of the day I am covered in black specks of tar and dirt.

This wind is really starting to get to me now. Wearing me down. What happened to my wonderful west wind? The farmers I have talked to have said that an east wind brings rain so I guess that in a couple of days I am going to get wet. Oh well, no one said it was going to be easy. Here is another difference from Vancouver. In Vancouver talking about the weather is nothing big, just small talk when you don't have anything else to say. Here on the prairies the weather is serious business, where a good wind and some hail could mean the ruin of an entire years crop. I have found that I can hold up my end of the conversation with the most grizzled of farmers. "Yep, this east wind should be bringing rain in the next couple of days", says I. "Yep.", says the farmer. "Got hit by about two tenths yesterday (that's 2/10ths an inch of rain)", says I. "Really, we only got 1/10th here." says he. Yep, just call me farmer Trev, (or Nature Boy to my friends at Merck, hi Dita).

**Day 32. June 16. 58 km (30 hitchhiked). Total 2331 km. Assiniboia. 6 hrs
Coincidence? I think not!**

What a day. Some might say that todays events were simply coincidence but I tend to think that the Big Guy up there had a hand in it.

Today was the absolute hardest day of the entire trip yet. Harder than Anarchist mountain, harder than Blueberry Pass, harder even than Manning Park. The wind was so bad that I could hardly stay on my bike. It was blowing from the south-east at something like 50-60 kph. I could spit up in the air and it would be blown 30 feet across the road. This is just crazy. I was on my bike for 6 hrs and had only traveled 28 km (also due to frequent breaks) when I decided to just give up. I have a friend who had moved out to Assiniboia a month ago to be a Pastor at a church and they were waiting for me to come by for supper and so I REALLY wanted to get

there in time for a real meal and a warm bed. I didn't want to have to hitchhike again but with 30 km to go I would not get there until 8:00 tonight which is just too late. Also my body was starting to give out too. The wind was coming from the side so strong that I have had to lean to the right to avoid being blown sideways. This has caused me to pull a muscle in my hip which was really starting to pain me when I called it quits.

So this is the course of events.

At 3:00 pm I gave up and started hitch-hiking.

At 3:30 a guy in a pickup stopped and gave me a lift the rest of the way to Assiniboia.

At 3:45 I started unpacking my gear and setting up camp in the back of my friends yard.

At 4:15 Patricia (my friends wife) comes racing to the back door and says that Rebecca (their daughter) was riding her bike and was hit by a car. I asked which direction and raced off in the direction she pointed way, hopping fences along the way. I arrived just as the ambulance was driving away and I heard someone say that she had been sitting up and crying so I was praying that she was just shaken up and not seriously hurt. No sooner had I arrived when I see Al (my friend) get out of a car and stand there looking at the scene. When talking to him later he said that he had just come upon the scene and was wondering if he should stop when he saw the green bike and thought "Rebecca has a green bike!". Then when he got out he heard a little girl say "That's her dad." and right then the colour just drained from his face, it was a fathers worst fear realized. I rushed over to him and was able to reassure him with what I had heard and we headed off to the hospital. At the hospital he and Patricia went into the emergency ward while I went and called home to our church to get people praying for them, something that never hurts.

While the doctors took her away for X-rays Al and I went back to his house so he could pick up Rebecca's health card and he went back to the hospital. I stayed there and dug around their pantry and made up a big pasta dinner so that it would be ready for them when they came back. In the end it turned out that all she had was a bump on her head and a broken leg, she was a very lucky girl. I hear from the police that what had happened was that Rebecca was racing some friends and rushed across the road without looking. She was hit by the front of the car, bounced up onto the hood and then fell to the pavement. She wasn't wearing a helmet.

So to summarize the series of "coincidences".

The wind was so bad that I gave up and hitched into town just in time for the accident. I then arrived at the scene just in time to meet Al and reassure him. I was then able to make dinner so that they could have something to eat when they got back from the hospital. The lady driving the car that hit Rebecca had just slowed down because she had seen some kids playing in a yard on the other side of the street. Also, she was driving her mothers car, usually she drives a Ford Explorer. If it had been the Explorer that hit Rebecca, she would have gone right into the bumper and grill and not onto the hood and I am sure that there would have been much more serious injuries if not a fatality. I really believe that someone was looking out for us today day.

Day 33. June 17. 0 km . Total 2331 km. Assiniboia.
Ahhhhhh, the wind is still blowing but I am not biking in it.

Day 34. June 18. 0 km . Total 2331 km. Assiniboia.
Or today.

Day 35. June 19. 0 km . Total 2331 km. Assiniboia.
Nope, great meals and a roof over my head, I am not ready to leave yet.

Day 36. June 20. 0 km . Total 2331 km. Assiniboia.

Almost ready to go. Yesterday and today would have been excellent days for biking, I hope the weather holds for tomorrow.

Day 37. June 21. 29 km . Total 2360 km. Verwood. 4 hrs.

Aaarrggggghhhhhhh!!!!!! More wind!

Ugh, the wind today is even worse than on the 16th. After 30km I said to heck with it, and decided that I would try biking at night when the wind is not as bad. I pulled up to a farmhouse outside of Verwood and asked them if I could pitch my tent for the afternoon and that I would head out that evening. They said sure, but if I wanted I could sleep in their spare bedroom in the basement. Since it was a hot day and their cellar was cool that's exactly what I did. She woke me up for supper (gotta love that prairie hospitality) and then I went back to bed until 7:30. I got up and was ready to leave when I looked out their windows and saw a HUGE storm coming. I mean the entire Western horizon from North to South was a completely black and this wall of clouds was mushrooming up over us. I looked at the couple I was staying with and said "Perhaps I should stay the night." They thought that would be a good idea and so that is what I did.

The storm hit around 8:30 and what a storm it was. The farmer estimated that the winds were over a 100 kph (I heard on the news the next day that there were gusts over 120 kph) and I saw it blow their picnic table across their yard! Seriously! It rolled across like it was a tumbleweed. Lightning was flashing like a strobe light and the thunder was deafening, I was counting my lucky stars that I decided that I was not out biking in it or out in my tent in a field somewhere. I am certain that if I was I would have done the old Dorothy thing and ended up in Regina or OZ.

When I called my folks tonight my mom said that we might have relatives in Weyburn so I am going to try and look them up tomorrow.

Well back to bed.

Oh wait, for you cyclists, there is a big ravine just before Verwood. Unlike out west where you work to climb the mountains then rest coming down, here on the prairie you always coast down then have to work to get back up and out.

Day 38. June 22. 140 km . Total 2500 km. Weyburn. 6.5 hrs.

Tailwinds rule!

It is just like the old saying, you don't know how good you have things until its gone and you miss it. Well I did not realize how big of a factor the wind plays when cycling until I had to fight headwinds for days on end. Since I have never heard how people deal with the wind, this is all trial and error for me. So far just pushing on into the wind does not seem to be working, I will just end up tiring myself out or hurting something. Holing up and hiding from the wind does not seem very appealing as the way things are going I could end up off the road for days at a time. I have ruled out biking at night because after thinking about it I feel it would be too dangerous because I have heard that drinking and driving is quite common here, the roads are so empty that the drunks don't have to worry about running into anyone. I would be quite the sight in my bright yellow jersey with reflective tape all over and that is attention I can do without. So far it seems that most of the wind is the result of thermals and it does not seem to get really bad until 10:00 or so. So if I face headwinds again (I hope I don't) I will try going to bed early and getting up at 4:00 am to be on the road by 5:30. That way I can get 5 hrs of biking (50-75 km) out of the way before the wind picks up, then press on until 2:00 and call it quits then. That should give me around 100 km which would be a respectable distance and would also put me near a

farmhouse near supertime ;-). As a side note, here in the country, dinner is what I would call lunch and supper is the evening meal. I am used to using dinner and supper interchangeably so I get funny looks when I mix the two up.

The importance of the wind is clearly obvious when looking at the distance I did today. I left Verwood at 8:30 and was in Weyburn (140 km) at 3:00, an average speed of over 20 kph. This is compared to yesterday where I only covered 30 km in 3 hrs and had to strain to do even that.

In Weyburn I looked up my relatives address in the phonebook and headed over. I knocked on the door and said to the lady who answered "Hi there, my name is Trevor Hennessey and I am bicycling across Canada. I think that we are related so I dropped by." She did not recognize me and seemed quite suspicious but after trading genealogies we were able to determine how we were related (she is my mothers cousin, making us 2nd cousins). And so I spent the night with a roof over my head after a great dinner, err..... supper.

Day 39. June 23. 36 km . Total 2536 km. Griffin. 1.5 hrs.
A short day.

Only a short day on the road today. Weyburn has a very nice computer setup at their library, 6 new computers with a high speed internet connection. It is free to use them but you are only allowed 1 hr on them, not nearly enough time for me. Since I had a lot to type up I went into town looking for a computer to use. The internet cafe wanted \$10/hr which I felt was outrageous so I went to a computer store and they let me use their demo computer. In all I was able to catch up to June 13 and I hope to have the rest done by Winnipeg.

After finishing at the library I headed back to my cousins place for a bite to eat then continued on. They offered to let me stay another night but since the wind was blowing east I wanted to take advantage of it while I could. Also, I find that when I am on the road I tend to go to bed earlier and get up earlier than when I am staying at a house so this way I can cover more distance tomorrow as well.

Because I did not leave Weyburn until 7:15, I only covered 36 km before the sun started going down. I was just passing through a small town and decided I would call it a day there. Well I want to make an early start tomorrow so I am going to call it quits now. Right now I am about 150 km from the Manitoba border so I should be in a new province tomorrow and if the wind continues to come from the west I am confident that I can break 200 km.

Manitoba

**Day 40. June 24. 204 km . Total 2740 km. Deleau. 10 hrs.
Manitoba and my first century.**

With a nice strong tailwind all day I was really able to fly. I also completed my first century (100 miles) and boy does it ever feel good. The road for most of the day was in pretty good shape although the section between Stoughton and Carlyle was a little rough but still 10 times better than the road near Cadillac. As I approached Redvers the scenery began to change, the rolling grasslands of the prairie began to give way to flatter, forested areas interspersed with small farms. Hwy 2 in Manitoba is in much better condition than the roads through Saskatchewan. There is only a gravel shoulder but traffic is light and the road is wide so I did not feel pressured by the cars. One thing that I have been noticing through Saskatchewan and Manitoba is the amount of road kill. Flattened prairie dogs are everywhere and I pass by 4-5 squashed skunks every day! Ewwwww!!!! You have to hold your breath for about 1/2 km to try to avoid the stink but even then it sticks in your nostrils and you can practically taste it. I don't know if skunks around here are particularly plentiful, particularly stupid or a combination of both but they sure are disgusting to cycle by when they are dead.

I checked my e-mail today and discovered that I now have a place to stay in Winnipeg. My uncle works for CN and spends a fair amount of time working with the other major rail centers. He had told one of his friends in Winnipeg about my trip and asked if they would mind putting me up for a day or two. Well today I got a e-mail from them saying that they would love to have me stay with them and that they will feed and shelter me, boy you don't have to ask me twice.

**Day 41. June 25. 58 km. Total 2798 km. Carroll. 10 hrs.
Shell-shock!**

Shell shocked, I think that is a fairly accurate description of the way I feel. My body is numb with fatigue, my ears are ringing from the roar of the wind and I want to go home. Well I wouldn't really go home but if someone offered me a ride to Ontario right now I would be tempted, I have to get away from this bloody prairie wind.

I had heard yesterday that rain was predicted for today so I set my alarm for 5:00 and was on the road by 6:15. At that time there was already a slight headwind and the western horizon was dark with clouds so I was pushing it to try and stay ahead of the storm. I had only gone 10 km when CRACK, a spoke breaks. A real Murphy's law event because of course the broken spoke would be on my rear wheel AND on the cassette side (hardest to replace). Then to make matters worse it started to rain. I tried to hitchhike to the next town so I could fix it under cover but after 5 trucks drove by (there is that rural helpfulness again) I ended fixing it up right there. At least I now know that I can replace spokes myself because this was the first time I have had to do it.

By the time I finished, the wind had switched around to a headwind and picked up in force. The rest of the day it only got worse. I spent most of the day in my lowest three gears and occasionally I even had to get off and push into the wind, there was nothing else I could do.

I just don't get the weather here. The storm blew in from the west but the wind kept coming from the east. Then once the sky was completely covered in clouds (really neat, some were wave like, others came in rows like a plowed field, yet others looked like bubbles). I could see clouds at different heights all moving different directions. One group would be moving south while above it other were moving north while higher still they were traveling east, very hard to predict where the rain would come from. I managed to duck one deluge (~1.5 cm of rain in 1/2 hour) but was hit by a couple others.

In a nutshell the weather sucked and so far I don't really like Manitoba much either. Saskatchewan was open and very pretty but here it is quite forested and plain looking. I also think that the license plates "Friendly Manitoba" are a lie. So far I have found Saskatchewan much friendlier, here the people just don't seem as nice. They pass by closer on the roads and I also get the impression that people here along this route are much poorer as well. While most houses and towns in Saskatchewan were nice looking and in good repair, here I see a lot of run-down areas. Plus there is the ever-present wind. Why is it blowing West? It is so hard bicycling against it. I would guess that there are 50-60 km gusts right now. How can I express in words just what it is like? It is horrible, the wind constantly tosses you around with gusts from all directions (except from behind). It will lighten up for a minute, teasing you, then return in full force. It screams in your ears and draws tears from your eyes. Oh yes, and since the temperature is only 8 degrees, with the wind chill I am just freezing. There has even been hail today. To sum up my feelings about today, when I finally found an inhabited house to stay at I was nearly crying with frustration. Nuff said.

Day 42. June 26. 235 km. Total 3033 km. Winnipeg. 13 hrs.
Now THIS is flat!

Now today was a LONG day. Because the wind was so bad yesterday and I feared it would be bad today as well, I was up extremely early (4:00) and on the road by 5:00. But there was no wind, HURRAY!!! I did have a new type of weather though, pea soup fog. It was so moist that I had to put on my rain gear and even then I got wetter than some of the days in the rain, that fog just enters every nook and cranny.

The roads were in fair to good condition and flat most of the way. I stopped in Wawanecha for breakfast (open early and cheap pancakes) and boy is that ever a pretty little town. It is nestled in a quaint little valley and it looked like they kept much of it forested parkland, a nice change of scenery from the rest of Manitoba.

Just outside of town I met up with my first cyclists on the prairie. One was a retired police officer (57 years old) from Quebec who was biking from Vancouver to Montreal (it sounded like he would like to go further but his wife wouldn't let him :-). The other guy was younger and is a contract engineer. He works until he makes enough money for the year then he quits and goes touring. He has toured Australia, New Zealand, Germany and the Netherlands and now he is going from Vancouver to Newfoundland. For a change of pace we road together for most of the day and boy did we ever burn along. The road was level and the wind picked up into a nice tailwind that grew stronger and stronger as the day progressed. We ended up passing another cyclist later in the day and she was amazing. She was 62 years old and pedaling a fully loaded touring bike alone! She was going from Lethbridge, Alberta to Prince Edward Island. Why? Because she always wanted to go there, that's why. Sounds like a good enough reason to me.

I left the other guys at Elm Creek (~160 km into the day) and pushed on to Winnipeg where supper was waiting, that's all the incentive I needed. Towards the end of the day the wind was so strong that I was averaging 40 kph and when I passed under power lines they sounded like flutes. In total I covered 235 km in 13 hrs and I am certain that this will be my record distance for this trip. When I got off my bike at their house I was definitely walking funny, something that the grandmother had a great time poking fun of.

Day 43. June 27. 15 km. Total 3048 km. Winnipeg.
What a great family.

This could not have worked out any better. These folks are some of the nicest people I have ever met. After spending a day with them I feel just like one of the family. They have a 13 year-old daughter, that loves to hear my stories and I have been having fun telling them. By the end of the day I feel almost brotherly towards her, that's how at home I feel. It has been really great to just hang out, talk, relax and of course EAT.

I am quite stiff today and somewhat sore in the neither region but it is not too bad. Perhaps I overdid it a bit yesterday? (I KNOW I overdid it!) I had to bike into town to get a tune-up at Woodcock Cycle and Sports (I would recommend them) and biking was ok, I only feel stiff while walking. It must be noticeable because the grandmother staying there is enjoying teasing me about it.

I tried to type up some of my journal today but I just could not get motivated, oh well I guess it can wait.

**Day 44. June 28. 0 km. Total 3048 km. Winnipeg.
One more day.**

I was planning to head out today but as the weather did not look very good and I was still a bit stiff, it did not take much to keep me here for one more day.

**Day 45. June 29. 57 km. Total 3105 km. Vivian. 5 hrs.
Whole lotta mosquitoes.**

I did not end up leaving Winnipeg until 12:00 which meant I a shorter day on the road. Nicole (the 13 year-old) wanted me to stay another day and I kinda wanted to stay as well but it is really time for me to get back on the road. I took the bypass from the southern part of the city to Hwy 15 and then took the 15 east to Vivian. Hwy 15 is similar to Hwy 2 in condition and scenery but was a good deal busier. However it was still not as bad as Hwy 1.

I was in no hurry today so I quit at 5:30 and set up camp in the back of someone's yard. The mosquitoes are really bad here but I have found that although they can bite through my track suit they can't get through my rain gear so that is what I wear until I can dive into my tent.

Tomorrow I hope to make it to Falcon Lake (~108 km) which is right at the Manitoba - Ontario border.

Ontario

Day 46. June 30. 131 km. Total 3236 km. Moth Lake. 10 hrs.
ONTARIO!

I am now in Ontario where I plan on spending the next 3 weeks or so. Last night it absolutely poured but my tent kept me nice and dry. That was the first time this trip where I have actually been rained upon at night. It did stop by morning which was nice because I hate packing up in the rain.

From Vivian I continued on to Elma where I turned north on Hwy 11 for 8 km to Hwy 44. Highway 11 and 15 pass through small farms and are mainly flat. Hwy 44 is flat to start but begins rolling through Whiteshell Provincial Park. All of Hwy 44 is in good shape EXCEPT for sections through the parks.

I ran into some more problems today. First, I broke another spoke, I guess that they are just really cheap spokes and I expect that I will end up replacing them all by the time I am done. The second difficulty I ran into today was that I had my first encounter with Horseflies today. I was biking along Hwy 11, which has a lot of ranch land, and could see that all the cows were huddled together and twitching like they were in great discomfort. In one yard a farmer had set up a fire barrel and the cows were all huddled in the smoke. I thought to myself "I wonder what is bothering them?" No sooner had the thought entered my head when they found me. These bugs are HUGE!!!! They are about an 1" long and 6 mm thick. They have a sickly yellow abdomen and big green eyes. Their buzz sounds ferocious and they simply look mean. Well I had 15 or 20 of these circling and dive-bombing me! They were bouncing off my handlebars, my helmet, my arms and I was essentially freaking out. I nearly took a fall when I tried to bat one out of the air. I felt like King Kong in the movies, on top of the Empire State building with little planes buzzing around my head. After a while of this and I hadn't been bitten yet I realized that I was going fast enough that they could not land long enough to bite me so I just tried to tune them out and kept biking.

I made it to Falcon Lake around 7:30 pm but to my dismay it was not a town but instead was a tourist destination. Just little RV parks, campsites, and cabins. There was no way that I was staying there so I pushed on. I continued for another 22 km along Hwy 1 (Boy I hate it, just too busy) passing into Ontario in the process. I was looking for places to stay but I could not find anything but bush! There was no houses and it did not look like I could guerrilla camp either because the ground was either wet and swampy or solid Canadian shield rock. Just when I thought I would have to push on the Kenora (~25 km too far) I saw it. The remains of a gravel road that had been barricaded with a sandberm. Since it was not posted as private property and I knew that the road would be level and I could put down tent-pegs, it decided to take a look. It ended going up right next to a beautiful lake! Fantastic! So right now I am camping right in the middle of this road next to my own private lake.

So right now I will let the Loons sing me to sleep. Goodnight.

Day 47. July 1. 64 km. Total 3300 km. Longbow Lake.
Happy Birthday Canada!

I am really into the Canadian shield now. It is quite startling the change of scenery from the prairies. The terrain is very rolling, up and down, up and down, and nauseating and the sides are treed with fir, spruce, poplar and other trees. There are lakes all over the place and most of the low-lying areas are completely waterlogged from all the rain recently.

I poked around Kenora and watched a bit of the Canada Day celebrations before continuing on. Oh yes, there is a bike shop in Kenora too. Heading out of Kenora I had a bear slowly cross the road 30 feet in front of me, that was close enough!

I was getting tired so I went down a road called Hockey Hollow to look for a place to stay. It looked like a resort type place so I was not too hopeful but I thought it would be worth a shot. I asked a younger couple (who were staying at their parents place) and they were ok with it so I started unpacking. However, as I was setting up camp their neighbor said that HE did not want me there and told me to leave. I figured that it was not worth making a fuss over so I left.

I bet he was from a city. 50-60 years old walking around with his shirt off and his belly hanging out. I'll bet you anything that he complains about teenagers nowadays and how people were friendlier back in his day. Oh well, jerks like him tend to get theirs in the end any ways.

I continued down Hwy 17 then turned south on Hwy 71. I pulled into the next driveway I saw, it was a house not a vacation home so I had higher hopes. As it turned out, things were better than I had expected for tonight. I thought I would have to bush camp again with peanut butter and jam sandwiches for dinner and a sponge bath to wash up. Instead I had a shower and barbecued pork and potatoes for supper. Yippee!!

Day 48. July 2. 104 km. Total 3404 km. Nestor Falls. 10 hrs.

Title 1: Another wheel bites the dust.

Title 2: DF air-support

I have to be brief because I must be up early tomorrow. Also, it is getting dark and I don't want to use a light for fear of attracting unwanted attention. Right now I am camping in the back of the Tourist Info center because no one would let me stay at their place and the camping area wanted \$17 (actually most campsites in Ontario, including provincial parks, are \$15-\$17)!

Road report: So far all of Hwy 71 is rolling. The first 45 km or so is newly paved with an on again off again shoulder. Then the road goes bad, lots of broken surface with no shoulder until 15 km pass Sioux Narrows. Then the road is ok to Nestor Falls.

The first 35 km of the day was fabulous. Full of lakes, and rocks and trees and wild-flowers everywhere. Then for a ways it turned to brush which is not as nice to look at. Both Sioux Narrows and Nestor Falls were unpleasant little towns. Actually they are not really towns, more like tourist destinations, and with this being both the Canadian and US long weekend the number of tourists running around is crazy.

Just outside Nestor Falls it happened again. CRACK. This time 2 spokes went and the wheel was looking really bad. When trying to replace the spokes I discovered that 6 out of 8 of my spare spokes are too short which means that now I don't have any spares. Also, when examining the rim after straightening it as best I could (hard because the cheap nipples are starting to strip) I noticed that the rim has cracked as well. CRAP!!!

The wheel is now as straight as I could get it which is not that straight. To top it off it is also out of round so I wobble down the road while the wheel goes bump, bump, bump. I don't think that it will last much longer so I will have to get it replaced as soon as possible. Unfortunately, the only bike shop before Thunder Bay is back in Kenora so I have to try to hitch back. I fear it won't be easy with the road mainly populated by tourists.

To top it all of it has started to rain. I am just going to go to bed now and hope tomorrow is a better day.

Oh yes about that title 2. DF = Dragon Fly. Behind the Tourist Center is really buggy and I was getting eaten alive by mosquitoes and flies until the dragon flies showed up. They flew around, sometimes nearly grazing my head, eating all the bugs I was attracting. Soon there were no bugs around and I could eat in peace. The Battle of Britain in the insect world.

Day 49. July 3. 120 km (35 hitch). Total 3524 km. Kenora. 12 hrs.

Title 1: How to turn 120 km into 360 km: Be an idiot like me.

Title 2: Limping back to Kenora

No point in giving a road report, it is just the reverse of the last two days.

I was up at 5:00 this morning to pack up before the Travel Info center opened and to try and hitchhike up to Kenora. Well I spent 2 hours trying to get a lift but no one would stop, even with my bike upside down! I thought about calling a tow-truck but discovered that it would cost \$180, MUCH TOO EXPENSIVE! I decided I would take my chances with my wheel and started pedaling back to Kenora.

Because I was so worried about my wheel giving out and the bumping and wobbling were disconcerting, I kept my speed below 20 kph even on the descents. Without any more problems I made it back to Sioux Narrows. There I called the bike shop in Kenora only to find that they would have to order something in and it likely would not be ready for 7 days or so. CRAP!

This was not satisfactory so I started calling places in Winnipeg and Thunder Bay, trying to find a wheel. After over an hour and a half on the phone I was getting really frustrated. No one could find a 36 hole hub to build a wheel on, all they had were 32's (a 36 spoke wheel is stronger than a 32). They kept trying to tell me that a 32 would be strong enough but I would have none of it. THEY don't have to ride on it for another 4000 km, worrying if it will last. Finally, on my last call I reached Farzan at Petries's Cycle and Sports in Thunder Bay. This guy really knows his bikes! He quizzed me about my bike and what I needed and said he would have a wheel shipped to Kenora by Greyhound tomorrow. Finally something is working out. It was now 3:00 and I still had 70 km to go so I headed out. Since the wheel seemed to be holding out I started going faster, 35 kph on the descents. I had now gone another 10 km when it hit me. I AM AN IDIOT!! Since the wheel has to be shipped from Thunder Bay any ways there was no reason for me to go to Kenora (120 km), I could have continued on the way I was going and waited in Fort Francis (80 km). DOH! It just goes to show you how you can get locked into one type of thinking to the exclusion of all other possibilities.

One nice thing did happen that really made my day though. About 20 km further north of Sioux Narrow a car passed me, stopped, let a lady out then continued on. The woman started jogging towards me and I was wondering what the heck was going on, was she planning on jogging all the way back? Nope, they were an English couple vacationing in Sioux Narrows who I had talked to during lunch. They were worried about me so they tossed their luggage into a motel and came after me to see if they could drive me back to Kenora. That would have been a 160 km round trip for them! I was completely blown away. Here all the locals in their empty pickups would blow by me while this vacationing couple wanted to help. Since my bike seemed to be holding up and I did not want to inconvenience them I thanked them profusely but said that I should be able to make it on my own.

I had made it another 20 km, 85 km now in total when CRACK. OH NO NOT AGAIN!!! Yep, yet another spoke gave out (on the cassette side of course). @#%\$&\$*@#!@!!!!!! I try 5 spokes but they are all too short but luckily my 6th and final spoke was just long enough that the nipple could grab it. I trued up the wheel as best as I could but it is TOAST. It wobbles so bad that I had to release the rear breaks to give it room to move. All the time my bike was upside down I was trying to hitch a ride but again, no one stopped. Actually a native Indian stopped but his car was too small.

I had just gotten back on my bike and started limping down the road when a truck towing a boat stopped. Bill was from Chicago and was on his way to a week long fishing vacation. We tossed my bike and gear into his boat and he gave me a lift into Kenora. So in the end it was an American tourist that saved my ass while the local Canadians could care less. Astounding.

Day 50. July 4. 10 km. Total 3534 km. Kenora.

Title 1: No one said it was going to be easy.

Title 2: A comedy of errors, trying to keep laughing.

I spent most of the day lazing around waiting for my wheel to arrive. I went to the local pawn shop, bought a paperback and just sat by the lake and read. The wheel arrived at 6:00 and it looked great. I swapped the tire from my old wheel and was just about going to cut the spokes from my old wheel to ship the hub home when I had second thoughts. The way things have been going I better not be hasty. First I counted the number of spokes on the new wheel.... Only 32?!? Count them again. Ack, still only 32! What happened to the 36 spoke wheel I was promised. I found a note the mechanic had written that said that all his 36 hole hubs were 8 speeds and I needed a 7 speed so he built up the 32 which "would be strong enough". I thought that I was quite clear that I wanted a 36 NOT a 32. If I wanted a 32 I had already found another shop that had one they wanted to get rid of for \$130 but I decided that I would spend the additional \$120 to get a 36. I was certainly not willing to spend the extra money and still only have the 32. Then I discovered problem #2. When I tried to put the cassette onto the hub there was a flare that prevented me from tightening the lock-ring so even if I wanted to keep the wheel I could not use it with the tools I have. Then problem #3, on a hunch I tried putting my BOB trailer skewer through the hub and it is too short! (The skewer goes through the axle and attaches the wheel to the bike frame). CRAP! When I bought the trailer they had to cut the skewer down 5 mm to fit on my bike but now I am paying the consequences of that action. It is always easier to remove metal than to add it!

Well one thing I have learned from this trip is to just take everything in stride. Tomorrow I will call up Petrie's and ship the wheel back for a refund. Then I will call Woodcock in Winnipeg and have them build a 36 spoke wheel and check to make sure that I can tighten the lock ring and get my skewer through. It looks like I will be stuck here for at least two more days but at least I am staying with a really great guy. He was sympathetic to my plight and said I can stay here as long as it takes for me to get going which means that this is one less thing I have to worry about. Well I am going to sit here and pet his brand new 5 week old Lab puppy for a while before going to bed. It's hard to remain stressed and frustrated with a puppy in your lap.

Day 51. July 5. 6 km. Total 3540 km. Kenora.

A close encounter of the elderly kind.

I had a very near miss with a car today. I was on my way back from the Greyhound depot after shipping the wheel back when I saw an oncoming car pull left into a driveway in front of me. That was ok because they had plenty of time but the car right after them just blindly followed them in, cutting me off. I shouted and slammed on my breaks and stopped just inches from their passenger side door. I don't know how the old lady could have missed me in my bright yellow jersey if she had actually looked but I have a feeling that she was just focused on the other car and just turned. Not a very pleasant experience.

I called back to Woodcock and had them start building up that other wheel. I am trying to anticipate all the possible problems ahead of time to nip them in the bud. I asked them to make sure that a hyperglide cassette would fit on the hub, it wouldn't so they have to change the axle. I had them check the width of the hub to compare it with mine and sure enough it is wider so I will have to order a new skewer as well. This is really getting frustrating. I think that my next touring bike will have mountain bike wheels. I saw a guy come into the shop today with a pretzeled wheel and in 5 minutes he left with a brand new wheel. Arrgghhh...

Since I had time to kill I went to the local book store and picked up three books. I read them all today.

**Day 52. July 6. 7 km. Total 3547 km. Kenora.
Still waiting.**

I am really, REALLY ready to get back on the road. A little break is nice but this is too much. I called up Woodcock but the guy I have been dealing with was on his day off, Oh oh, I hope my EXACT instructions were passed along. Ever play that telephone game as a kid? The one where the first person whispers a message to the next person and so on down the line. At the end you hear what the message has mutated into. I am worried I am now going to end up with a 28 spoke BMX wheel painted bright pink with purple polka dots. Hey you never know.

Sure enough when I talked to the guy actually working on the wheel he said that they did not have the right size spokes in the shop and that it would take a week to order them. "A WEEK!?! I DON'T THINK I HAVE MADE MY SITUATION CLEAR TO YOU!" I proceeded to fill him in and got him to call around to the other shops in town to track down the right size spokes.

So in the end they were able to find the right spokes and so the wheel is being built as I write this. I have asked the local bike shop to order a new skewer but they weren't sure how long it would take. I told them I don't care what it costs, just get them to ship it out overnight. What next?

**Day 53. July 7. 7 km. Total 3554 km. Kenora.
And waiting.**

The wheel arrived today and it looks great. I have high hopes for this wheel and have my fingers crossed that it will survive this trip. As I predicted my skewer was too short to use with this hub, good thing I ordered a replacement yesterday. Assuming the part got shipped today it should be here tomorrow. I really, really, really want to get going.

**Day 54. July 8. 0 km. Total 3554 km. Kenora.
And waiting. I thought I said ship it express!**

I packed up all me gear today, said my good-bye's to Doug (the fellow whose yard I am staying in) and went to the shop to wait for Purolator to arrive. IT DID NOT HAPPEN <SIGH>. They must have shipped it regular Purolator NOT overnight express. I thought I had made myself absolutely clear. Just another hard earned lesson I guess, Trust NO-ONE! From now on I will be sure to call the suppliers myself and be sure that the message gets across. I guess it is better to learn it now instead of hearing "Gee Dr. Hennessey, you mean you wanted that kidney for transplant today?"

So here are two more Trevor's Tips for the day.

- 1) Take a bicycle repair course before you leave so that you are confident that you can deal with most everything. When the nearest bike shop is 500 km away it would be a good thing to know how to replace a spoke and true a wheel or repack a hub.
- 2) Before you leave get the phone # of the best equipped bike store you can find. One that has most every part in stock so that no matter where you happen to be you can get that part couriered to you.

**Day 55. July 9. 111 km. Total 3665 km. Nestor Falls. 6 hrs.
Deja Vu.**

Gee this route looks familiar. I have now paid back all the distance that I have hitch-hiked previously with interest so I don't feel bad about it at all.

The skewer came in around 12:30 so after grocery shopping and packing up I was on the road at 2:00. The wheel is working fabulously but I can only think "What next?" It is going to take me a while to regain confidence in my bike and the funny thing is that I am going to need a couple of long days biking to recover from my week of "rest", usually it is the other way around. It is amazing how quickly you can lose your conditioning. This third (and last) ride over these hills has been the hardest yet. Of course I did spend essentially 6 continuous hours in the saddle but I am more tired than usual.

Right now I am staying at a yard about 8 km outside of Nestor Falls since I already knew that no one would let me stay in town. The couple living here are nice but unfortunately the gentleman has terminal cancer, a sad case. It was interesting to hear them directly compare the US medical system to the Canadian one. In the US they were able to access experimental treatments that put him into remission whereas here they can't get anything. Here in Ontario they have to pay for a lot out of their own pocket, even blood tests to look at the progression of the disease. If that isn't a two tiered system I don't know what is.

**Day 56. July 10. 114 km. Total 3779 km. Fort Frances. 7 hrs.
You may not drink and drive but others do.**

First the road report. For 25 km from Nestor Falls the road is in poor shape and the terrain is quite hilly. However, after 25 km the road is recently paved with a nice shoulder and the ground is much more level. The scenery reminds me of a hillier eastern Manitoba, small farms carved out of the forests. Most of the houses in the area looked like they would be excellent places to stay the night so next time instead of staying in Nestor Falls I would push on.

At the Hwy 11 junction I turned east and the road remained excellent and level to Emo. From Emo to Fort Frances the road is in poorer shape.

There WAS a sporting goods store with a bike department in Fort Frances. Why didn't anyone mention that? I could have just come down here instead of backtracking to Kenora. Oh well, I'm not a psychic so I could not have known. I guess it did work out ok in Kenora in the end.

Right now I am staying on an Indian Reserve east of town. Usually I try not to stay on the reserves as unfortunately they don't usually look like the friendliest of places but I could not find any other location and I saw a house with kids toys outside so I asked there. It worked out because they were really friendly and I was able to get dinner and a couple of beers out of the deal (I did pass on a joint though). Which brings up my title, I would not recommend bicycling in the evening anywhere in rural Canada (and probably the US and elsewhere as well) because it seems to me that no one thinks twice about drinking and driving. Two other people who were around for supper left (by truck) after having several beers each. I will definitely try to stay off the roads at that time and it probably would be a good idea for you sober drivers as well, let the drunks run into each other.

Today was a real scorcher, over 30 degrees, and the swim at the end of the day felt fantastic.

**Day 57. July 11. 147 km. Total 3926 km. Atikokan. 8 hrs.
Too hot and too long.**

Today was just too hot to cover the distance I did over the terrain I had too. Unfortunately I really had no other choice because with the exception of Mine Center, Atikokan is the only area of civilization between Fort Francis and Thunder Bay. 300 km is just too much to do in one day.

Again, I will start with the road report. Overall the road was in great shape, the first 25 km was somewhat rough and broken up but then there was 75 km of freshly paved road followed by 50 km of decent road. The newly paved road had a fair shoulder most of the way while the other sections had a shoulder sporadically although there is usually one present on the hills which was nice. Speaking of hills, this section was quite pleasant, more like the southern half of Hwy 71 than the northern half. I should qualify that last statement by saying that this road would be pleasant at cooler temperatures but at 30 degrees plus, having to travel 150 km was too much. Just like a car, I was doing ok on the level areas or down hills but when climbing I would quickly begin to overheat and have to stop for a while to rest. I think I went through about 7 liters of water today alone.

At the end of the day I really lucked out and found an awesome place to stay. I went to the outskirts of town and saw a couple out on their porch and asked if I could spend the night. Boy was I ever grilled. I was quizzed for a good five minutes as they checked me out, they even (jokingly) asked if I had any references and were surprised when I pulled out my address book and said that I have the addresses of over 50 people who have let me stay the night and that they were more than welcome to write to them. They laughed at that and said sure, I could stay. They might have been hesitant at first but boy did I ever get the red carpet treatment after that. First of all I was able to set up in their screened in gazebo so I did not have to set up my tent. Second, I was able to have a nice long shower and do some laundry (I haven't mentioned this before but I do my laundry in the shower with me, then after drying off I roll up my clothes in the towel, usually provided, and wring it out. That way my clothes are just a little damp and when I hang them out they are nearly dry by morning). Third, since they were having a late supper they invited me to join them. Wow, a beer, three burgers and a big plate of pasta salad later, I was feeling great. We (errr... I) ended up talking late into the night. I sure have turned into quite the chatterbox, it must be all that time alone on the road.

Well it's bed time now. Nite all.

**Day 58. July 12. 151 km. Total 4077 km. Shabaqua Corners. 9 hrs.
4000 km and another time zone!**

Man O Man am I ever tired. Biking in the heat yesterday really tired me out (I was going for nearly 8 hours straight) and having to go another 150 km today just about did me in. To top everything off I had a miserable nights sleep last night. You see, just like the traveling minstrels of old, I too must tell stories to earn my keep (something that I have gotten quite good at). Well after retelling all the bicycle problems I have had so far they were fresh in my mind for my subconscious to form dreams from. Also eating those three burgers (more meat than I have had in a long time) probably contributed as well. So on top of assorted dreams involving heavily armed Arab terrorists (who's butts I kicked by the way. Who's da man? I da man!) I also had a nightmare about my bike. I dreamt that I was out on a trail in the middle of nowhere and my rear wheel died again. Because I couldn't move my bike I had to take the whole wheel into town to get fixed. However, when I got back to my bike I discovered that I had parked near a river which was now flooded and I could see my bright red bags bouncing along the river bottom with my trailer following. I then had to dive in and try to rescue them from the torrent before they were all swept downstream. Not conducive to a good nights sleep in the least.

But I digress. The road today was as before, good in part and bad in others. The first 90 km was flatter than yesterday but the scenery was typical northern Ontario, bush, swamp and muskeg. While this was interesting for a while, after 90 km of it I was quite tired and ready for a change. After the first 90 km there was 10-15 km of hills which were very scenic then it leveled out until I got back on Hwy 17. If you decide to travel along this route I would recommend that you carry a good deal of food and water as services along this section were few and far between and traffic was light. As a side note, watch out for Ontario road maps. Some "towns" that are listed on the maps don't actually exist, they are just a name of a road.

I think that my body is starting to feel the strain a bit so tomorrow I will just have a short day and call it quits in Thunder Bay (~65 km). My legs are quite sore and fatigued and my left hand is starting to bother me where it sits on the handlebars. I think I need a day off soon.

This is to be continued. Currently I am in Marathon ON and am typing up the last two days to post as well but there will likely be no more updates for two weeks until I reach Montreal. I hope that you are all enjoying reading this as much as I am writing it.

**Day 59. July 13. 65 km. Total 4142 km. Thunder Bay.
So far so good.**

Well riding on Hwy 11/17 has not been as bad as I had feared/been led to believe. Truck and transport traffic was MUCH heavier than I have been used to but it was still survivable. The road was in good condition for most of the way with a shoulder that varied from really wide (nearly a whole lane) to very small (~4") but even on the small shoulder I did not feel in danger as the road lanes are so wide that the vehicles can give you some distance when passing. From Shabaqua it was rolling for 10 km then mainly flat farmland the rest of the way into Thunder Bay.

I didn't really like Thunder Bay much, from what I saw it was quite an ugly city. It looked to me like an old resource town that did not know what to do when it grew up. I was reminded of some of the smaller resource towns I have passed through, squat and run down, except this "small" town has a population of 115,000.

City bashing aside, if you do need work done on your bike, Thunder Bay is the place to be. I highly recommend Farzan at Petrie's Cycle and Sports (807) 623-7228. This guy is the most knowledgeable bicycle mechanic I have ever met or talked too, he really knows his stuff. He gave my bike a full tune-up and ended up working on that "new" rear hub of mine. It seems that when they re-built it at Woodcock they used two left-hand cones and this caused a lot of play in the wheel. I really hope that I have now gotten most of the potential problems out of the way and will have smooth sailing from here on. We talked for a while and Farzan said that if I was really interested in getting the ultimate touring wheel that I should get a tandem wheel (48 spokes). He had one in the shop and I wonder why he did not mention this to me when I needed a new wheel? Grrrrr.... I would have just bought it and to heck with what ever it cost.

I did hear a funny story today but before I retell it here is a disclaimer. I in no way suggest that you do the following as it is highly illegal, could send you to jail, and is just not very nice. At one shop I was waiting in we were trading funny stories and one guy told me about someone he knew who use to race in the US. Well every year before he when down there he would get all the Canadian Tire money he could get his hands on, then when he went down to the southern states he would use that as currency and since this was in the 80's he got it at par. Can you believe that? I can just imagine some southern cashier looking at those 10 cent bills, shrugging, and accepting them because he always though Canadian money was funny looking any ways.

Day 60. July 14. 100 km. Total 4242 km. Nipigon. 9 hrs.

Title 1: A truly hard-core cyclist.

Title 2: Encounter with typical small town teenage girls.

On the way out of Thunder Bay I stopped at the Terry Fox memorial. It was beautiful. The sculptor caught him perfectly, right in mid stride. The strain and effort required for him to push on is clearly written on his face and I can see how hard it was for him. Traveling alone, along the same route that he would have taken I can imagine what he was going through. Alone with the hardships of weather and insects and fatigue, he kept on running until his cancer returned and he had to quit, to sicken and then to die. It brought me to tears to realize that this man was nearly my age when he passed by this way. It was very moving.

Of course the government has placed a sign on the Terry Fox Highway saying "No running, no cycling." Are they clueless idiots or what? I ignored it and pressed on.

Now that I am on the route that everyone HAS to take if they want to cross the country, I am seeing many more cyclists. Six today alone. Two were headed west and four were going east but so far I am the only one going from coast to coast. The first guy I met today turned out to be the second most amazing cyclist I met this trip (the first being Marco who has been on the road for 2 years 7 months and 31,000 km, see the write-up for Crescent Valley). This guy said he was planning on going from Vancouver to Halifax but due to problems with his feet and time constraints he will be calling it quits at his home in Toronto. When I asked him when he left Vancouver he said July 1st. "JULY 1ST?!? You mean June 1st right?". Nope, he meant July 1st. He had made it to Thunder Bay in 13 days! Holy Moly! I know people who drove across Canada and were not able to make it to Thunder Bay in 13 days. He had gone across BC in 4.5 days, something that took me nearly 2 weeks to do! I learned that he works for Ford in Toronto and had planned to go from Vancouver to Halifax in 23 days, the total time he had off for vacation. He was on schedule until his feet started going numb in Winnipeg and he decided to take it easier (only 200 km days instead of 350km+ !?!). Personally, that does not seem like a lot of fun to me but I guess if you like covering the distance and only have a limited time off that's just what you have to do. Could you imagine coming back from a 3 week vacation and telling your buddies at work that you had biked across Canada? No one would believe you.

Here is a little aside. I am writing this in a little cafe over supper and there are four teenage girls blabbering in a corner. Well I guess that there is not much to do in a small town because I can hear them betting each other to come over and talk with me. It sounds like they have to sit here for 5 min to win. Oopps, here come two now.....

He he he.... Ok, I am back. Well a polite way of describing these girls would be to say that they are not the brightest bulbs on the tree. They must have thought I was stupid or at least deaf. They came over, sat down and uncomfortably started talking. Since this was a bet (and I was suppose to be the victim) I did not make it easy for them at all, forcing them to do most of the talking. After 3 uncomfortable minutes I looked at the other two sitting across the room (who were laughing quite a bit) and said, "So, is their 5 minutes up yet?". That shut them up quickly, the look on their faces was priceless. "You mean you heard everything?", one of them asked. "Yep", I said, "This will make a great story to post on my website, my friends back home will get a real kick out of it." I let them sit for the remaining two minutes to win their bet but then the four of them hightailed it out of there. I don't like being made the butt of a joke and it sure was fun turning the tables on them.

Anyways, enough of that. The road today was in pretty good shape for most of the way and the scenery was really pretty. One neat thing about biking along this area is that the soil and rocks consist of bright red and pink granite which sort of reminds me of Prince Edward Island. The shoulder was between 1-5 feet in width but the average width was around 16 inches or so. Again the lanes are wide enough that even if the shoulder was chewed up or non-existent there was still room on the road for the trucks to pass and there sure are a bunch

of them! Having been on the smaller back roads I guess that I am more used to having small/no shoulders and having trucks whizzing by because I met three guys who were biking around Lake Superior who looked at me with shock when I said that I thought this road was in ok shape (well IT IS compared to some of the roads I have been on). It seems that one guy in their group was blown off the road by a truck yesterday and he hit a guide-rail, cracking his bike frame. Ouch! Loosing wheels are bad enough but destroying an entire frame would really put me in a bad mood.

Oh yes, before I call it quits for the night Old Murphy struck again (the Law that is). Last week I had my dad send out a spare tire from Vancouver to Nipigon by Greyhound and they said it would take 4-5 days. Well here I am now, 6 days later and guess what? It's not here! Gee, no big surprise there, as I walked through the doors into the depot I thought to myself, "You know what, I bet it's not here.", and sure enough it wasn't.

It is too late to deal with it tonight so I will see what I can do tomorrow. Good-night.

**Day 61. July 15. 65 km. Total 4307 km. Rosspport. 6.5 hrs.
Gone Coastal (not postal).**

I was hoping that my package would arrive on the 10:15 bus so I decided to take it easy in the morning and sleep it. Well it didn't arrive. Here is another lesson learned, send everything by Purolator or Express post where they have a guaranteed delivery time and can track your packages. After 35 minutes person behind the counter could still not figure out what to do (it's just a Husky station so they are really only cashiers). I told her to give me the telephone numbers and I would do the calling. Well after 30 min I finally tracked down someone with half a brain and they thought that it might be in on the 11:55 bus. If it wasn't I was able to get them to promise to forward it to the next town at their expense so I could leave and not have to wait around for it to arrive.

Well I guess I was wearing my lucky underwear today (oh wait I'm in bike shorts, never mind), because the tire did arrive on the 11:55 bus from Toronto and I was off. Unfortunately it was into a headwind but at least I was on the road again.

The road was in good to excellent shape most of the way and the scenery was breathtaking. Much of the ride was elevated with a view of Lake Superior which was glistening in the sun. You could look out into the lake and see all the little islands (and some big ones) scattered offshore. The biking was made challenging by the fact that there were some good climbs over ridges along the way. There were two short climbs near the start (4-6%) then a longer (couple of km) one just before Pays Platt followed by a shorter one just before Rosspport. I ended up having to push my bike up most of the hills because my legs are shot and have zero energy for climbing. After 6 days and 750 km I guess that they just need time to rest and recharge. The scenery near Rosspport really reminded me of home, large rolling hills with lots of trees and the road winds along through them. This area could quite easily pass for parts of southern BC and sort of made me homesick.

Rosspport is a quaint little town right on Lake Superior that is an excellent place for tired cyclists to stop. However, since Rosspport does not have a library I am going to continue on to Schreiber tomorrow where they do have a library and spend a day or two resting and typing up my diary. But while I am here in Rosspport a great place to camp can be found just outside of town. There is a small park to the east of town where it you can camp for free (at least there are no signs saying you can't) and there are washrooms just across the road. Since it is only Thursday night and it is a small town I am comfortable camping alone here. I can see the remains of campfires which suggests that this could be a party spot on Friday and Saturday nights so I would probably find somewhere else if I was here then.

Because the grass was long in areas the bugs were pretty bad. In this case it wasn't mosquitoes or horseflies that were the problem, instead it is a new pesky insect, the black fly. It's amazing how many different insects there are that can make life miserable. Here is how I have been dealing with the bugs so far and it seems to be working so far without exposing myself to too many chemicals.

I have a very light weight track suit that is paper thin but the blackflies and horseflies can't bite through although unfortunately mosquitoes can. When the mosquitoes are really bad I put on my heavy rain jacket and rain pants and they can't bite through that thicker material. To protect my head I have one of those funky looking bug netting head gear that keeps them out of my face and away from my neck. Then any remaining exposed areas are treated with a high percentage DEET spray (at least 23%, Muskol is good but no name stuff will work as well). I spray my hands and the area of skin just above my socks but where my pants can ride up. I forgot to do this area once and ended up with so many bites that it looked like I was wearing two, red ankle bracelets. It was just a continuous ring of bug bites. Itchy.....

<Pause, SMACK> Ewwww..... Speaking of bugs, I just saw a mosquito that got in my tent. I flicked him to kill him but he must have just bit me because he exploded, spraying blood over my tent wall. That was really gross. Does that imagery give you a real feel for northern Ontario?

Well even though it is still early, I am completely beat so I am going to bed. You know the old saying, the early bird gets the worm. Hmmm... Getting up early didn't help the worm any did it? ;-)

I tend to subscribe to the other saying: Early to bed and early to rise makes a man tired and weak in the eyes.

**Day 62. July 16. 21 km. Total 4328 km. Schreiber.
Just what the doctor ordered.**

Today was exactly what I needed. I slept in until 8:30 and took my time packing. I struggled up over the one hill between Rosspport and Schreiber and coasted down into town. There was a nice wind from the west and my mind wanted me to keep going but my body just couldn't take anymore. You could say that in this case the spirit was willing but the flesh was weak.

Even with only a short day on the road I did experience a really neat weather phenomenon riding between Rosspport and Schreiber. On the uphill side of a climb it was hot, humid, and clear. On the other side the weather was completely different. It was a good 10 degrees cooler and really foggy. It seems that the valley I entered runs directly to Lake Superior and the cool moist air comes up from the lake reacts with the hot moist air from the inland to make the fog. It was quite interesting seeing weather happen like that.

I arrived in town at noon and went directly to the library where I spent the next 5 hours typing up the last month. I only got half of it done before I got sick of typing so I will do the rest tomorrow. After talking a bit with the librarian she offered to let me camp in her back-yard and I accepted sight unseen.

The town is having a heritage days celebration this week so I was able to score some freshly barbecued hamburgers before heading back to camp for a shower and to do some laundry. Both of which were sorely needed as the last few days were near 30 degrees and very humid. I plan on staying here tomorrow to complete my recovery and finish typing up the past months worth of entries.

I go sleep now.

**Day 63. July 17. 0 km. Total 4328 km. Schreiber.
Has it really been two months?**

I can't believe that it was two months ago today that I headed out from home on the start of this trip. Although when I sit down and really think about it, it seems that I have been on the road for ages. Keremeos, Osoyoos, Castlegar, they all feel like years ago and Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland seem light years away. Through all the trials and tribulations, ups and downs of this journey I feel stronger and confident that I can take care of anything that can be tossed at me. I look forward to seeing what the next part of the trip holds in store for me.

Actually one thing that still surprises me is the hospitality of the people and families that I stay with. It seems that it has gotten to the point where I only have to spend a few hours with them and I become an adopted member of the family, fighting for control of the TV remote. Today was no different, I woke up to fresh pancakes for breakfast and tonight we had a huge pasta dinner with ice cream for dessert and tomorrow she is planning strawberry and blueberry waffles (wow, bicycle touring sure is tough, I don't know how much longer I can keep roughing it like this <GRIN>). I spent much of the day finishing typing up my journal to the present (between today and yesterday I typed 13,000 words, that is over 24 typed pages). Unfortunately, I was unable to upload it onto the site because there has been a huge fire in Toronto that has knocked out the main trunk of the internet line through this section of Ontario. I hope to get this all up in a couple of days when access is restored.

**Day 64. July 18. 91 km. Total 4419 km. Marathon. 8 hours.
Luck of the Irish.**

I must have inherited the luck of the Irish along with the Hennessey surname because there is no way that everyone can be as friendly as the people I am staying with. This morning I had what will likely be the best breakfast of the entire trip. HUGE Belgian waffles smothered in fresh blueberries and strawberries and topped with whipping cream and maple syrup. This wasn't a breakfast, it was more like dessert. In fact I'm drooling just remembering it. I gorged myself so much on them that I had to sit around until noon to give myself time to digest enough of it that I could cycle without bursting. And then tonight in Marathon I ran into another amazing family who let me shower, do laundry, use their computer and to top it off fed me a meal of salad, steak and potatoes and ice cream. The qui

Aaaaaahhhhhhhhh..... A BEAR!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Phew, I really didn't need that! Just as I was writing this in my tent I heard a scraping sound and one of my bags fell over. I thought it had just tipped over until I heard more scratching and the wall of my tent continued to move. I was sure it was a bear trying to get at my food bags (yes, when I am in a town I leave them in my tent). Well I just freaked out, I shouted, clapped my hands and generally made a lot of noise. I grabbed for my flashlight and bear spray but CRAP, my bear spray was still attached to my bike where I left it. So with commando like speed I dove out of my tent, rolling along the ground and grabbed the pepper spray with my right hand while I scanned the yard with my flashlight in my left. (Ok, so it didn't quite happen like that but it sounds heroic). So there I am in my underwear, holding a flashlight in one hand, a can of pepper spray in the other and then I see it.... Their cat, crouching by the corner of their house looking at me like I am some kind of crazed lunatic. It was HIM scratching at my tent and giving me a heart attack, not a bear. What a relief (but I still did move my food into the house).

Now where was I before I was so rudely interrupted. Oh yes, the quickest way to a bicycle tourists heart is through their stomach and I love these folks already. I got out of the shower and their older daughter said that she was sorry but they had already eaten and all they had was some leftover barbecued steak and potatoes, would that be ok? "Would that be ok?!?", I thought, "That would be more than ok that would be fantastic". So I sat down and chatted with her while munching on a great dinner. She was close to my age and it was really

nice talking with a peer for a change, I have not had that opportunity much on this trip. I guess that is a side effect of choosing places to stay where there are kids toys (too young) or flower gardens and garden gnomes (too old).

As per road conditions, Hwy 17 was pretty much the same as it has been the whole time. The first 65 km was nicely paved while the last 25 km was quite rough. And in terms of hills they are still present but not as bad as they were coming into Schreiber. There was one big one after Terrace Bay then it was mostly downhill for 35 km then about equal amounts of up and down for the last 45 km though it looked like it would have been harder traveling west.

That's all for tonight folks, good night.

Day 65. July 19. 10 km. Total 4429 km. Marathon.

I am going to feel this in the morning.

Oh man am I going to be tired tomorrow. I will have to be brief because it is much later than I wanted it to be and I have to be up early tomorrow to make it to White River (~100 km) before the day gets too hot. The reason for the late night? Well I met a very nice girl at the library today who in the course of chatting asked if I would like to go for a walk tonight. Well I had wanted to get to bed early but I have a standing policy that anyone who has the guts to ask to talk/walk/go out with me is someone that is worth getting to know better (actually this is the first time EVER that I have actually had the opportunity to use it but I had thought about it before ;-). It was funny, it was almost like because we were complete strangers we could completely drop our guards and talk about anything. She now knows things about my growing up that even my good friends don't know. And I got the opportunity to hear about what it is like to grow up intelligent in a small town and what you have to deal with in the schools. I would have to say that she is one of the most intelligent, articulate, interesting and mature young woman that I have ever met and she has gone through and overcome (not entirely unscathed but stronger for them) such things that I don't think that I could have dealt with at her age. I see in her the enormous potential to turn into an amazing adult and I am looking forward to corresponding with her further.

Oh yes, and I did get essentially all caught up on my web site although I still have not managed to put the rest of my pictures on. They are really just too labour intensive to do and will probably have to wait until I get home.

Ok I have to go to bed now. I am not looking forward to getting up in 5 hours.

One other note. I had barbecued ribs and potatoes with the family I am staying with. Yum, it just doesn't get better than this.

Day 66. July 20. 100 km. Total 4529 km. White River.

Title 1: The home of Winnie the Pooh.

Title 2: A little taste of Italy.

Well it was just as I predicted last night, I am completely exhausted. My alarm went off at 7:00 but since it was so cold outside and my sleeping bag was so warm, it took me a full hour of drifting in and out of consciousness before I could drag my sorry carcass out of bed. Even though I was an hour late getting going it didn't matter too much as the cycling was really pleasant today. It was hot (mid to high 20's) but I had a nice cool tailwind and it was mostly level ground so it did not have to exert myself too badly. The road was in rough condition in places but there was always at least 16" of shoulder and even though it was cracked I could still ride on it. There were a lot of logging trucks on the road but most gave me plenty of room. One idiot however nearly took me out. He passed another logging truck effectively completely blocking both lanes with several thousand

pounds of lumber and steel all hurtling toward me. I slammed on the breaks and slide into the soft gravel shoulder of the road to avoid being mashed. Having several tens of thousands of pounds of steel and lumber flying by you at over 100 kph is really something I can live without. As Monty Python so aptly put it "I nearly soiled my armor." (An interesting aside: it is funny how it doesn't really bother me when they pass me going the same direction (relative velocity ~80 kph) yet it is extremely frightening when they come at you head on (relative velocity ~120 kph). Either way I would be equally dead if they hit me.)

Now many of you probably think that I am completely insane to bike across Canada. "You call that a vacation?" is something I hear quite frequently. Well today I met two guys that even I think are nuts. They are WALKING across Canada in support of funding Alzheimer research. Now you might be thinking that walking is no big deal, it's been done before. Well unlike most charity crossings I have met so far, with their support vehicles carrying gear, food, water, personal masseuse ect, these guys are doing it unsupported! Now THAT takes real guts. They each have what looks like a kids bicycle trailer behind them attached to a hip belt and they pull all their gear and food with them. They are averaging 40 km per day and have a website at www.sharpsites.echelon.ca/sea2sea.html.

Now if you recall, the past little while I have been complaining of really tired and sore legs. Well today I think that I have uncovered the reason for it. It is not because of my body or the hills but instead it is the fault of my bike. Even after two days rest I was still having problems this morning with the hills so I decided that it must not be my body but something else. I got off my bike at a rest stop and checked everything. Handlebar height? Check. Pedals? Check. Saddle height? Check. Saddle position? AH HA! It was that last one that was the problem. For some reason my seat-post clamp no longer hold my saddle in position but instead allows it to slide all the way back. This puts my seat 4 cm further away from the handlebars. Now this may not seem like much but it completely wrecks my cycling geometry. I have to arch my back more to reach the handle-bars, crane my neck to see and my legs are no longer correctly positioned over the pedals. None of these differences are really noticeable at the start but after several hours on the road the cumulative difference adds up. At White River I went into the hardware store and rigged up some repairs that should last until I hit a real bicycle shop. Actually, there is a local guy in town who does basic repairs and you can reach him at Superior Bicycle Repair, 807 822-2590. (That is something you quickly notice here along Lake Superior, every business name HAS to incorporate Superior in it somehow. Superior Bicycle, Superior Hair Cuts, Superior Gas, Superior Knitting Supplies, you name it they use it.)

I arrived in White River (allegedly where the original Winnie the Pooh was purchased as a mascot for the army) at 4:00. Since I have been having such great luck with being offered supper around this time I thought I would try to pick another winner tonight. Well I cased the whole town (not very hard to do) and settled upon the nicest house of the bunch. I mean this yard looks like a park: neatly trimmed grass, rock and wildflower gardens with vegetables galore. This was a property maintained by someone who had real pride in doing it and a lot of time on their hands = retired = possible empty nesters = kind people and supper? To make the situation even more promising I could see someone working in one of the gardens (my success rate for asking people in their yards as opposed to knocking is 100%). As it turns out most of my hunches were correct. The people living there were a really friendly retired Italian couple with grown up children. I was allowed to pitch my tent in back of their garage, have a shower and was invited in for supper. Fantastic! It was a real Italian affair too, fresh salad with an oil and vinegar dressing, a delicious soup and amazing home baked bread. This was all served with a 2 liter jug of his home brewed red wine (anyone who says that they are Italian but doesn't have a couple jugs of home brewed wine in the cellar is lying; either about being Italian or about having the wine ;-). Then to top it all off, for dessert there was ice cream topped with fresh picked wild blueberries and over it all was drizzled brandy. This just blows peanut butter and jam sandwiches right out of the water. From now on I will always be sure to arrive in town by 4:30, no more 8:00 arrivals for me.

So in all I fixed my bike (hopefully), had a wonderful meal, told a couple of my standard stories and headed to my tent to write it all down. Not a bad day if I say so myself.

Day 67. July 21. 123 km. Total 4652 km. Old Woman Bay.

Title 1: New partners on the road

Title 2: Bicycle tourists have NO modesty.

Whatever modesty I had when I left Vancouver is completely gone now. I guess the erosion started on the Prairies. You see, in BC there are trees everywhere and so whenever you have to relieve yourself it is really easy to get out of sight. Well this all changed on the Prairies. There are no trees, just wide open spaces except where farmers have planted them and even then those are either in view of the house or behind fences. This was no big deal because I quickly discovered that if you didn't see any cars on the horizon you had at least 45 seconds do your stuff before one would arrive. By the end of the Prairies that really wasn't much of a concern either, check for cars and then go but by now I just figured that it's nothing they haven't seen before and any ways, I did not know them and would never see them again. Well today was the day that I consciously realized that I had no modesty left, but before I get to that here is the road report.

Overall the section was quite hilly but between White River and Wawa (where they have Slushies!) these hills were different from the type I have encountered earlier in Ontario. These hills had long gradual climbs followed by long gradual declines which would have been easy to traverse were it not for a stiff headwind that made it all much more difficult. The road was in fair condition but there was a 36 km section that was poor but currently under road repairs. From Wawa to Old Woman Bay in Lake Superior Provincial Park was much hillier. From Wawa you descended for ~5 km then climbed for 13 km (part of it a 5% grade) before descending 4 km to the bay. As I write this we are camped right on the beach and in the background I can hear the rolling surf of Lake Superior breaking gently on the shore. The bay got it's name because one rocky cliff that makes up the south end of the bay looks like the profile of an old woman looking up at the sky.

Now you may have noticed that I have mentioned "we". That is because today I hooked up with a couple of other Cross-Canada cyclists and am riding with them for a while. In total I met 6 cyclists today. The Carmichaels, a family of four, were crossing Canada together. Dad and two sons cycled while Mom drove a motorhome, cooked the meals, did laundry, found camp-sites for the night, ect.. The other three were touring like I was, with all their gear on their bikes and they are who I am staying with tonight. Chris and Karen were brother and sister and were cycling from Victoria to St. Johns and had left on June 5th while Bob had left on June 17th. They had been leapfrogging each other the past couple days but tonight we all got together to spend the night. They were absolutely astounded by my stories of camping in people's yards and after telling them about some of the meals I have had (beats Mr. Noodles) and obtaining frequent showers (they went 14 days through B.C. without one) I am sure they will try it in the future. All in all these are the first group of fellow cyclists that I have met that I actually want to ride with for a while. A fun group of people to be with.

And now back to the modesty story. It was early afternoon and the temperatures were soaring. We (Chris and Karen) came upon a lake by the side of the highway and decided to go for a swim. Now you can't really go swimming in cycling shorts because when wet they would chafe badly when you got back on the bike, however, the most cover around was little 1 foot high bushes. Well there was no way that this was going to stop me from cooling off so right there by the side of the Trans-Canada highway I just stripped, pulled on my swim trunks and hopped into the lake. Very refreshing (the swim, not the nudity). And well, apparently I am not the only one who is completely not self conscious. When we finally got to the bay that night we were all hot, sweaty and tired so we all changed and jumped into the lake (Cool, I have now officially swum in Lake Superior). Karen and I were chatting as we cleaned up and I turned away to check out the horizon. I turned around and WHOA! Full frontal shot while toweling off. Well heck, if frozen bear paws and a skull didn't phase me in Saskatchewan there was no way that I was going to let this do it (and ahem, shall we say that while wearing a

Speedo there would have been a clear indication of whether I was phased or not). Well you know, it is surprisingly easy continue a conversation with a naked woman as long eye contact is maintained which in this case was not easy "Gee, I have heard about getting those pierced but this is the first time I've seen it!". I wonder what my female friends back home will think about this, they were shocked to hear that guys showered naked in public pools, well duh.

Well it is nearly midnight now after a wonderful, eventful day but before I call it quits I am going to sit here and watch the moon rise over the lake for a bit. It is a clear night and the moon and stars are reflected magnificently in the water, this is a night to remember (and not just because of the nudity ;-).

Day 68. July 22. 87 km. Total 4739 km. Montreal River.

Title 1: Busted!

Title 2: First real accident. Cause? Stupidity.

Well we got busted this morning for our illegal camping. I guess we should have listened to Bob and gotten up at 5:00 am to be off early but we were all just too tired. As it was, we were just finishing packing when the Park Warden came by and caught us on the beach. The days of being able to camp anywhere are long gone, the government wants their money. We told him that we arrived late at night and didn't think that we could make it to the next camp site (true but we left out that we weren't planning on making it either) so instead of fining us (\$100 per person apparently) he charged us the back-country fee of \$10.75 per tent and as only two were now standing (the third being packed already) we were charged \$21.50. Only \$5 per person but we were still somewhat bummed about having to pay this until we passed the campsites 15 km further down the road. Talk about highway robbery! The Ontario parks service charges \$18.75 per tent!!! That's not per campsite but per tent, it would have cost us nearly \$60 to spend the night legally! And get this, a 36 foot long RV capable of sleeping 4-6, using electricity, water and sewer and taking up 3 times the amount of space occupied by all four of us combined, is charged \$20. Where is the fairness in this? Most cycle tourists motto is "Take only pictures and leave only footprints" which is a heck of a lot better for our parks and environment than these mammoth, gas guzzling, road hogging monstrosities. It appears that our government is looking toward Yellowstone and other US parks for direction and soon only the rich will be able to afford to use our "public" parks. How can youth and lower income families afford to come to a park for a long weekend? Want to stop at a rest-stop? You have to pay. Want to go for a swim? You have to pay. We were able to get around these user fees because the ticket machines clearly said to buy a ticket and place it on your vehicles dash. Since bicycles don't have dashes we just assumed that we must be exempt ;-). Actually it was not just the government sites that were outrageous. The cheapest campsite I have seen in Ontario so far has been \$17 (\$18 for RV's). This doesn't affect me much, our escapade at Old Woman Bay was only the fourth night this trip where I had to pay to sleep, not a bad average. Actually it was almost worth getting busted because after the warden (bullet proof vest, gun and all) had left we nearly busted our guts laughing as we made up possible things we could say if we were wardens ourselves. "Get your face down on that beach and eat sand freeloaders!". "Put your head between your legs and kiss your cyclist ass good-by." I guess you really had to be there but Bob is a real comedian and we were all nearly peeing our selves laughing so hard.

Being on the beach was also a lot of fun but the sand does get into everything. Tents, sleeping bags, clothing, and I am sure our bikes are not very happy about it either. We also had a couple of drunks show up at the beach around 3:00 am but a downpour drove them away before they discovered us. There is something to be said for manicured lawns and private back yards.

Overall today was an amazing day. I would have to say that the splendor of the route along Lake Superior is comparable to the ride through the Rockies and southern Saskatchewan, it was just beautiful. Never in my wildest dreams did I imagine that Lake Superior would look like this. I had expected it to look like the Pacific/Atlantic ocean or any other large body of water. Dark, grey murky water, and from what I have heard,

polluted but this was not the case. Lake Superior is crystal clear and it is impossible for me to describe the colours we saw as the sun pierced the surface. Aqua green and turquoise blues were abundant in the small bays and coves along the shore and the deeper water was a rich deep blue or emerald green. If you replaced the fir and pine trees along the shore with palm trees I could easily mistake this area for the Caribbean. It was just so beautiful that we all ended up going swimming three times today, an individual early morning skinny dip in the bay to wake up, very refreshing. Then again around lunch at Katherine Cove. This cove was the most beautiful body of water that I have ever seen either in pictures or in life and I have been down the Pacific coast all the way to Mexico, the Maritimes and throughout Hawaii. This picturesque cove, nestled in the south end of Lake Superior National Park, had an amazing white sand beach and the tropical blue-green water which was quite warm as a result of the past week of hot weather. The image of this bay appearing as I came onto the beach from the trail through the forest will be forever blazed into my memory. The third and final swim of the day was more of a party. It was at Montreal River and there were seven of us cyclists together. Chris, Bob, Karen and I hooked up for the evening with the Carmichaels' and we are all staying together for the night. We found that there was a campsite that would charge \$12 per tent but instead of paying we found a clearing off the road and that is where we are staying. We are like a band of gypsies grouping together for protection and companionship. We all cycled at our own speed but met up at the swim spots and at the end of the day for a potluck (although the Carmichaels' really provided all the food, we just brought our appetites). One of their sons plays the bagpipes and so we were serenaded by the pipes out on the shore of the largest lake in world. Fantastic.

Even though we spent all day on the road we only traveled 87 km. This was due to the frequent swim breaks which were necessary because it was just too hot to be on the road for long. There was one section through the park that had been freshly paved and had not yet faded from that dark, tar black. I swear it acted like a frying pan, raising the temperature on the road by 10 degrees and just cooking us. After only 5 km on it I had drunk two liters of water and was drenched in sweat.

The good roads through the park did not last long. In fact there were some sections that were even more treacherous than Kicking Horse Pass through B.C. Narrow, no shoulder, cracked pavement and BIG, FAST trucks. It was on a section like this that I had my first real accident of the trip. My camera bag strap, which hangs on my aero bars, had slid down and was rubbing against my front wheel. Instead of stopping to take care of it I just reached down and moved it out of the way. It was at that moment that I hit a big crack which sent me onto the soft gravel shoulder, usually no big deal, "I'll just ride it out", I thought to myself. It was a big deal this time because there was a big pile of gravel left over from construction that took up the whole shoulder (who was the idiot who left it there?). Again this normally would have been fine, "I'll just go around it", but to make matters worse there was a big metal railing along the side. All this happened in the course of a split second but it is funny how time slows down. I had just enough time to clip out of my pedals and hit the breaks before my front tire hit the railing and threw me over the handlebars. I landed hard but my first thought was not if I had hurt myself but was my bike ok? Bodies fix themselves but bikes don't and I had visions of a cracked rim or bent frame and being stuck in Ontario again. Fortunately nothing was broken (either on me or my bike) and I just ended up with some cuts and bruises. Next time I will stop my bike. Idiot!

As I mentioned earlier, the scenery was breathtaking but there was a good deal of hills that needed conquering. I think that the first good one was 15 km or so from Old Woman Bay then there were a couple after Agua Bay. There was a sweet 5 km descent into Montreal River and we were done for the night. Just to let you know, carry a good supply of food and water. In the park there was water at the campsite but not at the rest stops that we could see. There were no stores right in Montreal River but apparently there is one about 2 km further up a big hill that I would not want to climb at the end of a day.

That's it if tonight. Goodnight all.

Day 69. July 23. 119 km. Total 4858 km. Sault Ste. Marie.

Title 1: Humidity going up and down like a yo-yo.

Title 2: Coca Cola doesn't make apple juice!?!'

The humidity today was the worst that I have encountered yet this trip. We did not get off in the morning until 9:30 because the Carmichaels' made up a big pot of oatmeal and the novelty of a hot breakfast kept us there until our stomachs were full. During our conversation the subject of the second title for today came up and I will just make brief mention of it today. Do not think about picking up bottles from the side of Hwy 17 to recycle! One of the kids earlier said, "Why are people throwing away half full bottles of apple juice? Well Coca Cola doesn't make apple juice! It is just disgusting, people are pissing in bottles as the drive (what, can't take 5 minutes to stop?) and then they toss them out the window. They are everywhere. From slobbs (beer bottles), to the middle class (Coca coal bottles), to yuppie's (Evian bottles) I have seen it all. Wonderful scenery huh?

The first climb of the day was very nearly our last. It just about killed me. I need a couple of kilometers of easy riding to warm up in the morning before tackling the hard stuff but there was no such luxury this morning. The climb out of Montreal River was brutal (perhaps just my impression) and the humidity was so high that only 0.5 km up it I was drenched in sweat. Three quarters the way up the hill we (Chris, Karen and I) wimped out and headed into the store for some air-conditioning and then spent an additional 15 minutes stretching to try and loosen up. For the rest of the day the humidity bounced up and down depending what the cloud cover was like. When it was overcast the heat was smothering, when it cleared a bit the humidity dropped like a rock. While we were stretching out I was asked the stupidest question yet. A fellow hops out of his Crown Victoria asks where we were from and then he drops a bombshell, "So what do you do if you get a flat?" What? He really had no clue! Bob told me that he has been asked this a couple of times but this is my first time. I had to bite back the snappy reply, "Hmm... Boy I never thought about that." "I guess that would be the end of the trip. I would just call a cab and catch the next flight home." Instead I say that we carry with us all the tools we would ever need to fix most things. Really, what is it that they think we would do? My theory is that their brain is so addled by the fact that we have come from Vancouver that they can no longer think straight and can't help but ask stupid questions.

From Montreal River there was about 20 km of climbing with the trend being upward most of the way then after 20km it started rolling. At Pancake Bay I stopped at the parks office to call home and update my parents and I found out that a reporter from the Vancouver Sun wanted to interview me. Cool! Chris and Karen went on ahead while I called him up and did an interview. When I was done the sky just opened up and there was a torrential downpour. Perfect timing, I was still undercover and just decided to wait it out. I went in to the center and talked to the park attendants, all girls working summer jobs with the parks service, and I guess I charmed them enough that they fed me a nice lunch. Smooth Trev', smooth.

The rain let up after 45 minutes and I met Chris and Karen down the road where they had ducked out of the rain and we continued on. About 45 km from Montreal River the road really leveled out until we came upon The Mile Hill <GASP>. Actually I would say that it was more like one long, steady downhill grade and I would not like to come up the other direction. Now about that hill. In every place that we stopped today people have been coming up to us and warning us about THE MILE HILL. That's the way they say in too. When they say "The Mile Hill" you almost expect ominous music to start up with the classic Dum dum dum sound... The fear in their voice is almost palatable and they speak of it in a hushed whisper as if they are afraid of their car being struck down by the almighty Hill for simply mentioning it aloud. The Mile Hill. According to legend one cross-country cyclist took one look at it and just turned around rather than attempting to climb it (just kidding but that's what they would have you believe). I kept saying, "But it's called Mile Hill because it is only one mile long right? Just a puny 1.6 km?" Even if it IS the steepest thing that we have ever encountered, if cars can get up it, we certainly can. Heck, I can PUSH my bike up a mile in 10-15 minutes. Just goes to show you that

people gage hills based on what they can compare it too in the area and most of this region is just flat or small hills. We TOLD them that there were days in B.C. where we had to climb for 70 straight km but they just can't grasp it with their Central Ontario brains. To them nothing can be as bad as The Mile Hill. Well we rode it and yes, it was a tough climb. I would say that it must be over 8%, maybe 12% but I climbed the whole mile standing up without having to get off my bike and yes it really was only one mile long. After that climb we essentially just coasted downhill for 20 km into Sault. St. Marie.

After doing out grocery shopping in town it was starting to get dark and I did not want to try and reach the next rest stop before dark so we decided to try and find a place to stay in town. Here is where I began the lesson on finding a good yard. We passed by a couple unsatisfactory ones until I saw two promising ones. I had Chris stand in the back (dyed hair growing out into a pretty cool afro with a beard, might scare an old lady) and Karen and I approached the door. We knocked but no one was home. However, from the stairs I could see that there were people in the backyard of the next house so that's where I headed next. I just went up to them, introduced ourselves and asked if we could camp in their back yard. "Sure, no problem", came the reply and so that is where we are tonight. Piece of cake! I wonder what Chris and Karen think about this? They looked pretty astonished at how easy it was and downright shocked when the lady offered the three of us showers. Ahhh, the joys of backyard camping. The scenery might not be as fine but it does have it's perks. The only downside to staying here was that Karen, walking around in her socks, stepped right in a pile of dog doo. Actually, Chris and I were holding our guts howling with laughter while Karen was less than impressed.

Well we did not finish dinner until 11:30 pm so it is late as I write this and I have to get some sleep now so goodbye for now.

Day 70. July 24. 110 km. Total 4968 km. Tullock Lake, Iron Bridge. Spoiled by Superior.

I am afraid that today's road report is a fairly poor one. Road conditions changed so frequently that I could not keep them all straight in my head until tonight. Here is what I can remember. From Sault Ste. Marie to Echo Bay the road had a huge shoulder and was very level. Then from Echo Bay to Desbarats it was mostly level but the shoulder came and went. Then all the way to Iron Bridge there were rolling hills but they were all fairly short and not very steep. It was quite hot today but not as humid as yesterday and we had a wonderful tailwind so cycling was pleasant. Although Chris, Karen, and I were quite tired and could have done with a shorter day, we have all learned from bitter experience that when the wind is blowing your way you go as far as you can because tomorrow it might switch around and come right back in your face.

At Sault Ste. Marie we sadly left the beautiful shores of Lake Superior and started onto Lake Huron. Compared to Superior this route is a poor second. Even though it is called the Lake Huron circle tour we have only seen the lake a handful of times while most of our time is spent cycling through farms and bush. We did manage to get in a swim at a private beach in Thessalon so that makes two Great Lakes down and three to go. Boring scenery aside, our riding was made even more depressing by the fact that we have been running into some really miserable people. Last night it was a woman at a supermarket we were trying to buy groceries at. Because of the long day on the road we were there near closing and had to rush through the store. I was going to buy a hot package of chicken from the deli but wanted to wait until I was on the way out so it would still be hot. When I went back I found that the woman behind the counter had put it away and was really a bag when I asked her if it would be too much trouble for me to have it. She wouldn't get it for me. Then today we ran into another three idiots. First we had a guy in a pickup slow down and shout "Get the F--K off the road." There was no shoulder and the side of the road was all chewed up, where does he want us to go? Then there was a woman at a souvenir shop who would not let us fill our water bottles in her washrooms. "Where do you think you are going with those?", she said as we walked in with our bottles. "We have bottled water for sale for \$2." Well gee, as tempting as that offer was, we shook the dust off our feet in her store and headed 2 km to the town and got

water there. Finally, at the end of the day Chris needed to use a washroom so we stopped at a campground but they would not let him use theirs. What is with these people? Nothing better to do than be jerks? I think that they all have several things in common but the main one must be that they all live tedious, petty little lives and the only way that they can feel big and in control is by pushing someone else down. On the road later, the three of us talked about this and decided that we could come up with all kinds of snappy, sarcastic replies that would put them in their place but we would never be anything but polite because otherwise we would be stooping to their level and debasing ourselves. Instead we just shrug and move on. It still makes me mad though.

The funniest thing that happened today occurred at lunch. We were hiding from the sun and wind in the shelter of a building, just sitting on the ground making peanut butter and honey sandwiches. I was eating my sandwiches when I saw this huge daddy-longlegs spider crawling around the lid from one of the jars of honey and Chris sort of half heartedly trying to flick it out. Ewww, gross. "That is disgusting but since Chris doesn't have a problem with it in his honey lid I guess that I don't care either.", I thought to myself. Chris was tossing rocks at it and had succeeded in squashing it a bit. Finally I could contain myself no longer. "Chris, why are you letting that thing crawl around your honey lid?" "My honey lid? This one is yours.", he replied. AAAAAaaahhhhhhh!!!! HE'S RIGHT!!! That IS my lid that he just squashed a spider in. He had been thinking the same as me, if I did not care about a spider in my lid then neither did he. Once I cleaned out the lid and got over my revulsion we had a good laugh about it.

Tonight we had hoped to make it to a rest stop outside of Blind River but this morning we were invited in by the lady we were staying with for a pancake breakfast and so we did not end up on the road until noon. Around 8:30 pm it was starting to get dark and we still had 15 km to go to the rest stop so we decided to camp at the next decent place. We saw a nice house right on Tullock Lake outside Iron River but decided against knocking there as none of us particularly felt like talking to anyone else that night. Well not 50' from that house I saw an old road that appeared to lead to the lake. It looked promising so we headed down to take a look. Jackpot! It was an old boat launch that lead right to the lake and would make an excellent camping spot. We quickly set up camp and started dinner. Boy oh boy, Chris and Karen might just convert me back into a stove user. They made up a fantastic noodle soup that consisted of 2 packs of Mr. Noodles, some green beans, carrots, green peppers, a can of lentils and a whole bunch of spices. It was hot, spicy and delicious. Then for desert I had half a strawberry/rhubarb pie left over from last night so we put that on top of the stove to simmer. Heated up it was delicious, what a feast.

After the meal was over and everything cleaned up we headed to the lake for a swim. Chris rushed forward and plunged in ahead of Karen and myself. ABORT! ABORT! came his shout from the water. Karen and I stopped at the edge and discovered that although the surface of the lake looked nice the bottom was all swampy and the water was just gross. We had a great laugh as Chris towed the grime off him and decided that we could go to bed without a bath tonight.

Tomorrow at Espanola our little cycling group is breaking up. Chris and Karen will be continuing onto Ottawa via Hwy 17 through North Bay and Sudbury while I am heading south over Manitoulin Island, under Georgian Bay and from there on to Ottawa. Chris has to be back in Victoria for the start of school in September so they are rushing through Ontario to be able to spend more time in the Maritimes. Myself on the other hand, have no deadline and I have heard so much about Manitoulin Island that I could not go by without checking it out. I am a little sad about splitting up but I am giving them a friends address in Montreal and my grandparents address in PEI so I am sure that we will hook up somewhere down the road. Chris's girlfriend from B.C. is driving out to Nova Scotia as a holiday and will be picking them up to drive back. I would love to road trip back with them but am not quite prepared to cut my trip short to be able to do so. If we do not meet up again during this trip it is not a big deal because we are already planning a get together at my place in the fall with the Carmichael's to share stories and pictures.

Well off to bed.

Day 71. July 25. 100 km. Total 5068 km. Massey.

Title 1: A must stop attraction that you will not find in any tourist info book.

Title 2: 5000 km!

Since this was to be our last breakfast together we made pancakes with wild raspberries on top for our morning meal. However, because of the time it took we were unable to make it all the way to Espanola and called it quits in Massey at 8:00 pm. We did not feel like staying in someone's yard so we started asking around for good places to camp, preferably on a lake or river. In the past it has been the local kids who knew all the good spots so we asked a bunch of teenagers hanging around at the gas station if they knew of any (GASP, we asked for advice from a bunch of good for nothing hooligans just hanging around looking for trouble? The newspapers and most older peoples views on youth today sure are out of touch with reality.) Sure enough they knew of the perfect place. There was a local park that was about 2 km from town, was right on the river, and had outhouses. We went to check it out and it was perfect! Lots of trees and grassy areas but with a nice sandy beach and way out of sight of the road. To top it all off, there was this natural slide going into the water. One of the cliff walls bordering the river was made entirely of clay and after hundreds of kids have gone sliding down it there is now a section worn away into the shape of a slide. I watched the kids going down it a couple of times then decided that having broken 5000 km today there was no way that I was going to chicken out and not go down this. I climbed my way to the top and down I flew. OUCH OUCH OUCH!!!! After the first foot down the slide my Speedos turned into a thong wedgie and I bare cheeked it the rest of the way down! Now wet clay may feel all smooth and slippery but I assure you that it is not, there are all sorts of sand and abrasive materials in it. Sliding down it fast and bare assed was more like going down sandpaper. I carpet burned my bum quite seriously. I called it quits after the second time (yes I tried it again but attempted to go down on my feet.... It didn't work.) but I would still say that if you ever pass through Massey you have to stop and make a small detour to the town park to try for yourself.

The road today was characteristic of the past few days, great in parts and poor in others. A shoulder most of the way but absent or unrideable in others. There were even less hills than yesterday and the last 10-15 km was flat. Yes I know that I am lacking in details but hey, no ones perfect. The scenery was mostly unremarkable with Lake Huron, when visible, far away.

Tonight will be our last meal together as a trio and tomorrow we go our separate ways. Because we played in the water before pitching camp it was nearly 10:30 pm before we even started cooking. Late meal aside, to celebrate our last time together we made a fantastic supper. We made up a bean salad to start and followed this by a great pasta dish. Again it was the dessert that, pardon the pun, took the cake. I was in charge of creating the dessert and had picked up some instant pudding and some brownies when grocery shopping earlier. I made up the pudding with powdered skim milk and heated it over the stove. Then, when it was all hot, I crumbled in the brownies and cooked it a bit more. Karen thought it was gross to be eating something that rich at midnight but that just left more for Chris and myself. It was soooooo good. The pudding was hot and the brownies melted in your mouth. Mmmmmmm.... Even though I am stuffed, just thinking about it is making me drool.

Well as usual it is now nearly 1:00 am, I really have to catch some sleep.

Day 72. July 26. 96 km. Total 5164 km. 10 Mile Point, Manitoulin Island.

Title 1: You won't believe where I am staying tonight.

Title 2: Breaking up of the triumphant trio.

It was such a long day because it took us forever to get off this morning. We did not get up until 9:00 then of course there was the morning swim and breakfast and by the time we left it was 11:00 and starting to get hot.

Chris's rear rim was nearly dead so we had to go to a bike shop in Espanola. He has been riding it cracked for the past 600 km trying to get to North Bay where we have contacts at a bike shop but today we could see that two spokes had nearly pulled completely out of the rim and it would not last much longer. We went to the bike shop and I picked up a new chain (mine was badly stretched by now) and here we parted company. I am feeling torn, I want to take my time and be sure to see all I want too and yet I would really like to hook up with them in the Maritimes and drive home together. A road trip home by car seems a much more fitting way to end the trip than an 8hr plane flight.

Now about my camping spot. There is no way you can guess where I am sleeping tonight. I am in a real, honest to god, tepee! Yes you read right, a tepee. Poles in a triangle, wrapped in canvas, tepee. When I was passing through Little Current on the island I thought about camping behind the tourist info center on the water but because I was planning on catching the 9:10 am ferry at the other end of the island I wanted to cut my distance to travel in the morning from 65 km to 45 km. I saw a rest stop 20 km away on the map and headed for that. Doh! The problem with this large scale map is that even though an area looks like it is on the water it could be miles away. It ended up being 9:30 pm and getting dark when I finally arrived only to find that I was on top of a cliff about 10 km from the ocean! So much for my swim tonight.

The whole area of the rest stop was quite exposed to the road, not many trees, but there was a tepee set up in front of the info center. I was still looking for a place to camp when a guy watching the sunset jokingly suggested that I sleep in the tepee. Well why not? Once that seed was planted, how could I resist? So that's just what I did, I pitched camp and spent the night in the tepee. It was interesting to see feel the difference of camping alone again. When I was with Chris and Karen I slept right through the night without a worry but things are different when you are alone. I woke up to every car and truck that pulled into the rest stop and wondered if I was going to be harassed. It is going to take me a while to get used to this again.

Now that I am off Hwy 17 here is the road report. From Massey to Webwood the road is flat and newly paved. Then we had to take 2 km of gravel to reach the bike shop and it was another 1 km or so of gravel then paved roads to Espanola. From Espanola to Whitefish Falls was the most hilly part today and yet the most scenic of the Lake Huron circle route so far. There were lots of ups and downs but nothing too strenuous, more like the northern section of Hwy 71 near Kenora. There was even one rock wall that looked like it was entirely made up of marble or quartz and had purple and red veins of crystal running through it, very pretty. The road was in poor condition with no shoulder but at the time I was riding it there was very little in the way of traffic. Near Whitefish Falls there were some fantastic picture opportunities of classic Canadian shield scenery, rolling rocky ground with stunted pine and fir trees with small lakes in the background. However as I got closer to Little Current this magnificent scenery changed, the terrain became more and more flat and the rocky shield turned into farmland. Then the rest of the way to the rest stop at 10 Mile Point there were a couple of climbs but nothing overly strenuous.

At Espanola I stopped to check my E-Mail and it seems that the Vancouver Sun article had been run. I'm front page news!! I spent about an hour reading e-mails from people who had read it and were giving me compliments and encouragement and that helped to lift my spirits after separating from Chris and Karen. Here is a copy taken from the Vancouver Sun website.

Cyclist's Web site bares terrors, triumphs

Pete McMartin Vancouver Sun
Saturday, July 24, 1999.

Trevor Hennessey's Web site can be found at <http://www.trevorah.findhere.com> and if you were to call it up today you would find his last entry was written on July 12 from a place called Shabaqua Corners, Ont., which, by bicycle, is exactly 29 days and 4,077 kilometres down the road from his parents' home in Surrey. The beginning of Trevor's entry for that day is emblematic of his last three months. It reads:

"Man O Man am I ever tired."

Trevor Hennessey is 23. This summer, he found himself at that rare point in life when, poised between a childhood past and an adult future, a young man has the freedom to do whatever he wants. Trevor, who graduated from Simon Fraser University in April, who had spent the previous five years grinding out an A average when he wasn't volunteering at Children's Hospital, who will be applying to medical school this fall, decided he wanted to bike across Canada. He would see the country and meet the people. He would go from Vancouver to St. John's, Nfld.

The difference between him and the thousands of other bicyclists who attempt the same thing was his Web site. He had started it up to serve as a running travelogue, complete with colour photographs. He would be On The Road, virtually.

He left in May. Calling Friday from a pay phone at Pancake Bay provincial park, 80 kilometres north of Sault Ste. Marie, he said: "I figured rather than make expensive phone calls back home every couple of days, I would keep a record on the website so my friends and family can follow along on this journey with me.

"Also, I wanted to keep a record so in 20 or 30 years I could show my kids and say, 'See what Pop did?' "

He writes his entries, he said, in a logbook at night after making camp. He transfers those entries on to the website whenever he reaches a town library with Internet access.

"One thing that needs to be taken into context," he said, "is that I'm writing those entries after a long day's ride and I'm utterly exhausted. [My] feelings in those entries are just laid bare. My heart is on my sleeve."

Which is the website's charm. Hennessey sets out to write an account of a trip. But like all travel writers, he unintentionally reveals himself to the reader instead. He sets out on May 16 a wide-eyed greenhorn, "a bit nervous about the trip," but "feeling pretty prepared." This conceit is shattered the very next day. Rain that "was just too horrible" forces him to the shelter of a motel "that my parents

generously offered to pay for." Here was an adventurer not yet quite free of the umbilical cord.

Day Four finds him shaken: "The magnitude of what I am undertaking is now starting to really hit me." Bad weather and his first real climb destroy any bucolic notions about the trip he may have had. "Today was an absolutely exhausting day. "I have never had to work so hard in my entire life. I had to do two enormous climbs today."

Innocently, he had thought he was in shape before he left on the trip. "By the end of the day I would walk for 5 min then bike for 2 min before my legs would start to cramp and I would have to walk some more. My legs were really tired at the start today (residual from yesterday) so I am somewhat worried about them for tomorrow as I worked 3X harder than yesterday. I have not been sleeping well since I have left, surprising considering the exercise I am getting. I also NEED a shower! 2 days and 164 km, my feet are ripe!" But he's young; he's strong; he perseveres. "I was exhausted both physically and mentally. I knew that if my mind gave up on me my legs would quickly follow. I started chanting the old army standard "left, right, left, right, left", pushing against the pedals with all my might."

He encounters the first of many kindnesses: a vacationing German couple who invite him to dinner watch dumfounded as the famished Hennessey downs "3/4 of a loaf of french bread, a package of sliced meat . . . three apples (and) two delicious barbecued sausages."

He finds it is the people he meets that are the real landscape. The Keremeos wagon smith who repairs old carriages. The three girls in a Grand Forks diner who, unasked, pay for his dinner. (Heartened, he writes: "Thank-you so much girls. Your simple gesture came at a time where I was hitting rock bottom and you lifted my spirit.") There was the fellow bicyclist who had pedaled from Argentina to Alaska, and the 62-year-old woman bicycling from Lethbridge to Prince Edward Island. And there was a young couple with two children in Canmore who put him up in a spare bedroom and inspired him to write: "Meeting great people like these restores ones faith in humanity, newspapers should be covering people like these instead of murders and crime."

He is continually surprised at the trust strangers greet him with, opening their homes to him. He takes keen joy in birds warbling in roadside ditches, Prairie horizons "cut with a razor" and the luxurious solitude of a road to himself. In the little town of Piapot, Sask., he stays at the home of a native Indian who brings out "skinned bear paws and plunks them right down on the dinner-table. They were skeletal hands with the muscles and tendons still attached and ... they sure do look like human hands." Then, he "plunks this grinning bear skull in front of me It still had green alfalfa bits in its teeth." He survives hail, electrical storms, Prairie winds that force him to

walk, shattered equipment, delays, exhaustion and his first encounter with Ontario black flies. Through it all, he slowly becomes aware his body and mind are changing. The road draws him out. He begins to understand, when invited to dinner, that "just like the traveling minstrels of old, I too must tell stories to earn my keep (something that I have gotten quite good at)."

In short, he finds himself growing up.

From his phone booth, he said: "I used to be fairly quiet and reserved. But now, I'll gab away. . . . And I have become a lot more flexible with problems, taking things as they are, rolling with the punches."

Over the phone, Hennessey said he was waiting out a rainstorm. He said he had met up with other riders who were riding across the country, and he said one day he was talking with one of them and they both agreed that this will definitely not be the last long-distance bike ride for either of them, that the experience was so lasting and so rewarding that it was almost addictive. He then said he expected to reach St. John's by mid-September.

And then?

"I will," Hennessey said, assuring me his enthusiasm had limits, "be flying back."

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Not a bad analysis huh? It was really neat to read another persons impressions of my trip as taken from my journal entries. I think that he captured my outlook on this trip precisely.

Well that's about all I can remember right now. I had to write this up the day after because I did not want to risk a light in the tepee last night. So if I remember anything more I will fill it in later.

Day 73. July 27. 136 km. Total 5300 km. Wiarton.

Title 1: Teleported to the Mediterranean.

Title 2: Having second thoughts about this route.

I am starting to have doubts about the wisdom of taking this route to Ottawa instead of staying on Hwy 17. The heat is oppressive, the hills are brutal and I don't know if the scenery has been impressive enough to warrant the amount of work it is taking me to ride through it.

I was not overly impressed with the remainder of Manitoulin Island, just more farmland, but the morning started off well. I was up at 5:00 am to catch the ferry and pack up before I get caught in the teepee. One side effect of this was that I caught the most amazing sunrise I have ever seen. From up on the cliff I could look out over the Georgian Bay and the sun was slowly rising from behind some islands out in the water. I could actually see the rays of sun coming up from behind the hills on the islands while the rest of the sky turned a brilliant red. Breath taking.

The remainder of the ride on the island to the ferry at South Baymouth was just through more farmland and slightly rolling terrain. The ferry ride was very anticlimactic, when you are out in the bay all you can see around you is water and in my opinion it was over priced. Boy, I am just Mr. Negativity today aren't I? Well that's just the way I am feeling. I guess I am worried about the section I am taking to Ottawa. This route is only

250 km (two days in theory) longer than Hwy 17 but as I discovered to my chagrin today, the route is never as straight and flat as those lines on the map. Oh well, I am committed now so only time will tell.

From where the ferry drops you off on the Bruce Peninsula to Miller lake there are a lot of climbs then it levels out to Ferndale. The heat was bad (33 degrees) and I was dying for a slurpee so I asked a kid where I could get one. He said that the closest one would mean I would have to do a side trip to Whippoorwill, a 4 km side trip on Hwy 9. Four km for a slurpee and the town is on the water? No problem man! I headed there and was suitably impressed with the Georgian Bay that I went for a swim. The water looked just like Lake Superior, crystal clear blues and green but it was MUCH colder. Severe shrinkage factor, but considering the heat it was very refreshing. I was getting tired of the farmland on the peninsula and seeing how beautiful the bay was I did not want to head inland and leave it. I saw on a map that Hwy 9 appeared to head in the direction I was going and might even be a little shorter than Hwy 6. I asked a local if the hills were comparable between both routes and when she said that it was I decided to go ahead and take Hwy 9.

Damm... These car drivers are going to be the death of me. There is no way that the hills on Hwy 6 are as bad as these. Steep climbs that went up and up and up. Trying to climb in this heat just about gave me a stroke. But in the end I was rewarded with a scenic descent into Wiarton. I swear it could be mistaken for the Mediterranean. The aqua blue bay, pebbled shores and Italian villas nestled along the cliffs all led the feeling that you were in Europe. It was so beautiful that it got goose bumps and it lent me the energy to do the last climb into town.

With the heat today I really needed a shower and needed an easy place to crash for the night so I went and knocked on a likely looking door. Again, it could not have worked out any better. I had a meal, a shower and right now I am writing this snuggled up in their comfy spare bed. Who could ask for anything more?

Day 74. July 28. 145 km. Total 5445 km. Midhurst.

Title 1: Was it worth it? No.

Title 2: Was it worth it? Yes.

Title 3: Was it worth it? Maybe.

Title 4: Pressure cooker heat.

I was up at 6:30 and sat down for breakfast with the family. Everyone has their own story to tell and if you take the time to listen you might just be amazed by what you learn about them. Here I am, a complete stranger and yet completely accepted into the household. I learned about their struggle to recover from a horrible Christmas Eve accident where their youngest son was killed and their eldest severely injured and the subsequent 12 years of trying to cope and recover. The fire that destroyed their previous home and all their possessions and pictures. And yet they are still here, surviving and moving forward without complaining or whining. I think that most people out there nowadays who do nothing but whine and complain about the government, tuition raises, photo radar, ect. could learn a great deal from these people who have at times nearly lost everything and yet have moved forward to make the best of the situation. Why is it that we seem to be coming into a generation of "me first" people. Those who want "their rights" and "their opinions" held up above all others with no regard others. The people I met here are a breath of fresh air.

Here is the road report for the day. Hwy 6 from Wiarton to Hopworth was in good shape with a shoulder and mostly level for ~10 km then gentle climbing along Hwy 70 to Owen Sound. From Owen Sound to Woodford along Hwy 70 was HORRIBLE. Narrow roads, badly cracked pavement, no shoulder and lots of traffic. To top it off there were a couple of big climbs. One to get out of town, one after a few km and one entering Woodford. The day was already a real scorcher and the humidity was in the 90's so it was at this point that I began to regret coming this way, perhaps I should have stayed on Hwy 17? Then there was an awesome ride

from Woodford all the way to Meaford, good roads and downhill or level most of the way which made me feel better. In Meaford I left Hwy 26 and entered the Georgian Bay trail, a hard packed gravel multi-use trail.

<Queue announcer type voice> Straight, level and a good surface with no cars and mostly in the shade. Does that sound like the bike paths in heaven? Well wait! You don't have to ride Hwy 26 and get hit by an RV to get there, the Georgian Bay trail will suit your needs.

It was created to link up ~30 km of trails between Meaford and Collingwood and goes through wonderful orchards and shaded areas. Unfortunately in Thornbury the trail started to weave a good deal which slowed me down a lot because with my skinny, bald touring tires I have very little traction on gravel. At this point I left the trail and stayed on Hwy 26 to Midhurst. Near the end of the day there was a construction zone and I was giving two choices for detours. D1 was for trucks while D2 was for cars. Well I did not feel like covering any more ground than I had to so I made a D3 route. Essentially I just ignored the detours (which didn't specifically mention bicycles) and just went straight through the construction zone. Here is a little aside: At one point near the end of the day I thought I felt the wind pick up and start blowing through the hairs on my arms and legs but I looked around and no flags or leaves on trees were moving. I looked down and my arms and legs looked like the grill of those vehicles that drive through bug infested Ontario at night with their lights on. I was covered head to toe with small green bugs! There were hundreds of them that were caught in the oily, sweaty hairs of my arms and legs and it was all those bugs squirming around and beating their wings that made me feel like the wind was blowing. Very disgusting but since there were so many of them in the air there was really nothing I could do so I just tried to ignore them and pressed on.

I hope to make it to Ottawa in three days and to Montreal within five but I am not sure how long I can keep this pace up. The heat and humidity is becoming unbearable. Around 5:00 pm it was getting so bad that I think I was reaching heat exhaustion. I was sweating enormously and when I stopped biking to go get groceries I could not stop my hands from shaking. "That's not good.", I thought and headed for the shelter of an air conditioned mall. I have gotten the shakes before when it was cooler as a result of going too far, too fast, and with too little food so I stopped for supper in case this was the cause. Just to be on the safe side in case the shakes were heat induced I ate 2 liters of ice cream for dessert which helped to drop my core body temperature and between that and the food the shakes went away. The secret to surviving the heat (besides not being stupid and biking 145 km in it) is to drink LOTS of water and try to keep your clothes wet so your body doesn't have to try and regulate your temperature by sweating. Every 30 minutes or so I would just go jump in a creek or lake but if they weren't available I would go and use a garden hose from a house to hose off. Slurpees are also an excellent cooling fluid and I must have drunken 4 liters worth of them today alone.

I don't know if this route is going to have been worth it until I compare notes with Chris and Karen to find out what Hwy 17 was like.

Well I am going to be up early tomorrow to try and beat this heat so I better hit the sack now. Even though it is 10:30 pm it is still really hot and all I can do is lay here and sweat while waiting for sleep to come. Somebody please take me out of the pressure cooker, I'm cooked through and through.

Day 75. July 29. 152 km. Total 5597 km. Tory Hill.

Title 1: A roller coaster of hills and emotions.

Title 2: The heat wave continues.

Title 3: Swim in the swamp.

Oh I'm tired. So very tired. The sun beat down today with no mercy and it took no prisoners. I am completely baked.

I have come to the conclusion that there is no such thing as wasted time while touring just time better spent elsewhere. I feel that the extra two days and 250 km that I have to do compared to the route along Hwy 17 would have been better spent in the Maritimes. The scenery has not been what I expected and in speaking with the locals to get the really good scenery along Manitoulin Island and the Bruce Peninsula you have to hike along the shore. Something I just don't feel like doing. Perhaps at some later date.

The road from Midhurst to Edgar was ok and not too many hills. From Edgar to Orillia it was nicely paved but quite hilly. Hwy 12 had a small rough shoulder, Highway 44 was a good road but the traffic was heavier and Hwy 45 started out poor but the traffic was light and the road got better. It was along this road that I absolutely scared the crap right out of a cat and I nearly fell off my bike laughing (simple things like this amuse me greatly now). I was biking along and a young cat was nonchalantly crossing the road. Suddenly he caught sight of me and stopped dead in his tracks. His hair stood up on end, he nearly jumped out of his skin as he swapped head for tail and took off through the yards as if Cerberus itself was chasing right behind (the three headed dog that guards the gates of hell for those of you not up on your Greek mythology). He ran full out for a couple hundred yards and dove headfirst into a barn and disappeared. I guess they don't get many cyclists along this route.

After Irondale it was very hilly but the hills were so close together that you could fly down one and get halfway up the other side before you have to work hard to get up the rest of the way. I was having a great time riding it like a roller coaster and it was here that I met a new pair of cycle tourists. They were a young couple from Edmonton and were going to St. Johns. They were on a fully loaded tandem and towing a BOB trailer but today was their first day on the road. It seems that they have a 12 day rail pass and are alternating between cycling and taking the train. We road together but they were too slow on the hills for my tastes so I told them that I would wait for them at the next town and we could camp together.

I arrived in the next town after flying over a couple more hills and started looking for a place to stay. I parked my bike in sight of the road so the couple could find me and went up to a cottage to ask if they knew of any parks in the area. They knew of one down the road but before I could leave they asked if I wanted a cold pop. "Of course.", I said and promptly sat down in their kitchen. They were just finishing supper and the wife asked if I wanted a piece of corn and some steak that they had left over. Wow, I only came to ask for directions and here I was getting supper, awesome! I had told the couple on the tandem about how I was camping across Canada and could not wait to see their face when they walked into the kitchen and saw me chowing down on steak and corn. I asked one of their granddaughters to watch the road for two people riding one bike and shout at them if they passed by. The idea of two people on one bike really caught the little girl's imagination and she quickly hurried out to watch for them. Sure enough, 15 minutes later they showed up and the wife ushered them into the kitchen and offered them a meal as well. The looks on their stunned faces was priceless. After supper we took off to look at the park but it was unsuitable so we went back and asked to camp in their yard.

Their cottage overlooked a body of water and I said straight away that I was going to swim in it. "That's not a lake! That's a swamp." Said the family, "You'd have to be crazy to swim in THAT!". The gauntlet had been thrown and I had no choice but to pick it up. I mean come on, I am bicycling across Canada and have the reputation of being a crazy person to uphold. Once I said that I was going to swim in it I had to go and put on a big show of doing it. IT WAS DISGUSTING! The bottom was just a mass of rotting vegetation and slime but I just said that it felt so good oozing between my toes. I had their admiration and the deed was done so I got out of there pretty fast and went for a shower. No more swamp swimming for me, reputation or not!

We stayed up late talking and so now I must call it a night. See you tomorrow.

Day 76. July 30. 141 km. Total 5738 km. Dacre.

Old Man Weather: So how do you want your cyclist?

Mother Earth: Well we've baked, we've boiled and we've poached him. Lets try frying next.

Old Man Weather: Ok, one fried cyclist coming right up.

Title 2: THE HILL FROM HELL.

Man it's hot. I mean really hot. That 35 degree day in Grand Forks doesn't come close to this. I can't remember when I have ever been hotter than I am today. What am I doing in this heat? In the mirror my eyebrows look white from all the salt crystals encrusted in the hairs from evaporated sweat. I leaned my head against a wall and the pressure of my head against my helmet caused the sweat absorbed in the cushions to come pouring down my face by the gallon. I should just find an air-conditioned mall and go hide in there and sleep. It's just too damn hot.

I'm dying right now so today's report is just going to be the road report. The old brain is just too overheated to be creative right now. The temperature is 36 degrees and the humidity is 98%. I heard on the news that factoring in the humidity it is equivalent to being 43 degrees out. And yet I still covered 141 km. I don't know if I should be congratulated for this or be tossed into an insane asylum for doing even 10 km in this heat. Oh well, I survived and I'm that much closer to Montreal.

Road conditions changed so frequently today that I had to write it all down on a notepad to remember. Tory hill to Cardiff was hilly but I seemed to go down more than I had to go up and there was a shoulder most of the way. Then it was more level to Bancroft but the traffic in town was CRAZY. I was sure that I had made it 6000 km only to get killed by some blue haired old lady driving a Winnebago. This weekend is the Jemboree (jamboree) and 12,000 rockhounds from around North America and the world have all congregated on this tiny little town known as the Mineral Capital of Canada. From Bancroft to Mcarther the road was good but hilly and HOT. At Hardwood Lake there were more good hills and the road was in poorer shape. The WORST hill I have ever encountered was right before (or was that right after) Denbigh. I swear that it had to be over 20%, it was unbelievable. I could not even pedal up it, in lowest gear and standing up I could barely move forward. Pushing the bike did not fare much better, I could only take five, staggering steps before having to hold the brakes to keep the bike from rolling backward and stop to regain some energy. Half an hour later I made it to the top, three quarters dead and ready to pass out. I went to a house to ask for a cold drink of water (the water in my bottles being 28 degrees) but no one was home. I did however catch a glimpse of my reflection in the window and scared myself. I looked like death warmed over. My face was completely flushed, glistening with perspiration. Beads of sweat were running down my face and I could hardly keep my eyes open. I staggered over to the house next door and the guy on the porch took one look at me and sent his daughter for a cold beer. I plopped myself down in a lawn chair in the shade with the beer and he let me catch my breath before quizzing me on my trip. I hope I never see a hill like that again in my life.

To Dacre the road conditions were even worse but the hills were not as bad. The whole side of the road was just one big patching job (looks like drunks did it) which made the whole thing really unrideable. The CCA touring book said from Griffith it was gentle climbs but they neglected to say that you climbed "gently" the whole bloody way. From Griffith to Dacre, a distance of approximately 30 km, you have to climb all the way except for 3 km at the half way mark and then two - 1 km long screamer descents before reaching the town.

Day 77. July 31. 172 km. Total 5910 km. Rockland.

Title 1: Ottawa. Been there, done that.

Title 2: Reunited and separated again.

Thank goodness the riding today was not as rough as it was yesterday. I have finally left the Canadian shield behind and entered level Ottawa valley. I am hoping that it will be smooth sailing from here to Montreal where

a hot meal and warm bed awaits me. The road from Dacre to Renfrew was not very difficult at all and seemed to consist mainly of short climbs and long descents. Out of Renfrew to Hwy 17 was a big climb which scared me off the recommended CAC touring book route. The book suggested going along secondary roads to avoid the Trans-Canada but Hwy 17 looked level while I could see hills in the direction the book recommended. Since I have been screwed by the book before I decided to take Hwy 17 (the traffic being the devil I know) instead of the secondary with possible killer hills (the devil I don't). Today was the start of the long weekend and Hwy 17 was too busy to really be safe with the crappy shoulder it had but I am still glad I took it. As I was riding along I could make out a cyclist ahead of me. As I got closer I could see that there were two cyclists on the road, "Could this be Chris and Karen?". I started really pushing it to catch up and sure enough it was them! What a great surprise. Even though I had covered 250 km more than them, because of their days off in North Bay I was able to catch up.

We left Hwy 17 at Annprior and took level back roads into Ottawa. Once in Ottawa we headed for the parliament buildings along the bike path but soon returned to the road as the bike path badly broken up, narrow and winding. During a slurpee break I met another cross-Canada cyclist. Joel is crossing Canada from coast to coast and had met Chris and Karen earlier in the week. He has been doing weekly phone calls to the CBC and my parents had told me to look out for him. Well here we are, half way across the country and we bumped into each other. Before Parliament, Chris and Karen left to go and visit friends in town and I was back on my own again.

When I finally arrived at the Parliament buildings it really hit me how far I have come. I am in the provincial capital, nearly 6000 km from home! I did the token pictures in front of the building and headed out to try and cut down the amount of distance I would have to do tomorrow to get to Montreal. Again it is best to just ignore what the CAC book says. Take the main road in front of Parliament (Rideau St) and just stay on it. It changes names a couple of times but will take you out of the city directly. Then around Orleans cut across to Hwy 17 (before this point Hwy 17 is a divided expressway and you can't ride on it.) Then just stay on Hwy 17 for the rest of the way. Traffic on it was not too bad because the 400 series of highways take most of it. The road is also in ok condition with a 2 foot wide shoulder and most importantly it is FLAT. The CAC recommended route is much, much hillier. <Sarcasm On> But they say it goes through scenic farmland. HA! If I see anymore "scenic" Ontario farmland I am going to barf. After something like 3000 km (bigger than B.C., Alberta, Sask., and Manitoba combined) I just want to get out of Ontario.

That's all for tonight. Tomorrow, MONTREAL!!! Woo Hoo!!!!

Quebec

Day 78. Aug 1. 168 km. Total 6078 km. Montreal!.

Title 1: I'M HOME!

Title 2: So close and yet so far: A long day.

Title 3: 6000 km and entry to Quebec.

Today was a very difficult day of biking but I AM FINALLY OUT OF ONTARIO. Every km seemed to take forever and the day just dragged on. I thought I would never make it to Montreal. I think that it was a case of being so close (1 days bike) away from all my friends and yet still so far (168 km) away. At 80 km I was feeling ready to quit for the day and yet I was not even half way done yet!

From Rockland to Hawkesbury, Hwy 17 was in its usual poor condition, small shoulders that were somewhat cracked but still rideable. Hwy 344 in Quebec was something else all together. The first 10-15 km was highly cracked and broken, reminiscent of Saskatchewan and foreshadowing what I know Quebec roads are like. Even with the crappy road the ride was pleasant as traffic was light and the road meandered along the Ottawa river through cottage country. I'll make a little side-note here. In Quebec people really like their stone and brick instead of wood or vinyl paneling so many houses are just beautiful to look at. I am afraid that I have misplaced my map right now and can't remember the whole route I took so I will just have to fill it in later. Sorry about that.

Now a bit of warning about biking in Montreal. It is a lot of fun to bike through but you have to be careful. The cyclists are crazy, the pedestrians have a death wish and the drivers just don't care. Stop signs are for suggestion only and yellow lights mean hurry up. If you are at the intersection when the light goes red it would be wise to wait a few seconds to let the last few cars run through. Jay walking is a way of life so be prepared for cars stopping to let people cross and watch out for the crazy drivers who stop in the middle of the road to run an errand. In Montreal if you can't find a parking spot it is perfectly acceptable to turn on your four way flashers and stop in the middle of the road to run into a store. I am serious here, they will block an entire lane of traffic doing this and no one honks, they just go around. The funny thing is that with all this disregard of rules, the one I have never seen broken is turning right on a red light which is a big no no in Quebec.

Now you might think that with all this madness that cycling would be really hazardous but I find that it is quite the opposite. The drivers here are quite predictable, they may coast through stop signs and weave through traffic but they are well aware of cyclists. I felt much more worried in small rural towns where you will be at a stop sign and a car who has the right of way waits for you to go. You wait for him because he should go first but after a delay you start to go, then he starts to go, then you both stop. You never know what that other person is going to do and that is much more dangerous than having the car coast through and then you coast through after. Also, being able to run stop signs, ride on sidewalks and weave all over the place does allow you to get around the city much faster <GRIN>.

For those of you who don't know why I know and love Montreal I will explain. Last year I spent 8 months living and working in the city on a school sponsored work term. My time in Montreal last year was, up until now, the highlight of my entire life. Most of my best friends are in Montreal and my experiences here were the original catalyst for this trip. Of all the cities I have visited, if I had to chose one to live in it would be Montreal. The life and character of the city can not be touched, at least in the summer time. The International Jazz Festival, the Just For Laughs Comedy Festival, film festivals and concerts are just some of the things going on and the average night you can walk down St. Catherine's or St. Denis at 2:30 am and there are more people on the street than on Robson St. in Vancouver during the day. The Quebec people are great but unfortunately the government stinks. For a city of 3 million with tourists from all over the world they sure are behind the times. Most of their Metro stations are inaccessible to the elderly or handicapped as they don't have elevators

and only some have escalators (usually only one way). Then all the government signs are unilingual French. If there is a service interruption and the bus stop has moved it is only in French. Construction going on? The notice signs will be in French only. This is all extremely frustrating and I think goes to demonstrate the arrogance and narrow mindedness of the government (I will say again that in general I like the people living there). Heck, when I entered Quebec there wasn't even a "Welcome to Quebec" sign. The attitude I get is simply, "We will be happy to take your money but we don't want YOU". ("we" being the government).

Day 79. August 2. 15 km. Total 6093 km. Montreal.

The pizza nazi.

Today was just a nice day off. I lazed around, went to a bike shop for a tune up (McWinnies on Sherbrook, ask for Bruno), got a haircut and then biked around looking at my favorite parts of the city. If you only have a little time to spend in Montreal the must see sights are Notre-Dame Basilica, the top of Mont. Royal and St. Joseph's Oratory. It is also nice walking around the Old Port and around St. Catherine's and St. Denis.

Then for lunch I stopped at my favorite pizza place in the city. Now I am not going to give the name or too many details for fear of being sued but this place is the counterpart of the Seinfeld episode about the "Soup Nazi". This place has the best pizza at a ridiculously low price, the cheapest I have seen anywhere. You can buy one slice of pizza for a super low price, a slice plus a pop for a low price or two slices and a pop for a good price. You can't buy 2 slices of pizza for two times the super low price, you have to take the pop too and pay the good price. Following? I tried once to buy one slice, eat it, and go back to get another one. No deal! I was given a slice of pizza PLUS a pop (though that's not what I asked for) and had to pay the higher price. Thus the idea of the pizza nazi and I am not the only one who has seen the parallels. At supper time the line of people can stretch out the door. The person at the counter goes down the line and points his finger at each of about eight people, gets their order and then passes out the pizza and takes the money. If someone hesitates he gets all impatient and starts pushing them to make a decision. I have heard the regulars refer (quietly) to a new person that it's just like the soup nazi. Hilarious.

Chris and Karen arrived tonight as well so we have a full house. Tomorrow I am going to head to my old place of work and do some typing while Chris and Karen are going to get a tour of the city from Claud, a fellow cross-Canada cyclist that they met cycling in BC and who lives near Montreal.

Day 80. August 3. 0 km. Total 6093 km. Montreal.

Awesome friends.

I had high hopes for being productive today but it just did not turn out that way. I slept in and then screwed up by heading to catch the bus I used to take to work and then discovering that it only ran at peak hours and I had just missed the last one. I finally got in to work and it had seemed that absolutely nothing had changed, it was as if I had never left. Pretty scary if you think about it. I got about a weeks worth of entries typed up but could not post them because their computers are behind a firewall.

I came home to an awesome party. My friends here go all out when it comes to dinner parties. Last night were quizzed about what we liked. "You like steak? How about corn? Burgers? Ok, we'll need some vegetarian stuff so will make up shish kabobs." She's a whirlwind planning machine and we were a drooling mess by the time she was finished listing what we would be having for dinner. A bunch of friends arrived and we just sat around eating, drinking, and talking until the early hours of the morning. It was just what I needed. There is however, no chance I am getting up at 6:15 am tomorrow to get on the road. I'll be lucky to be up before noon.

**Day 81. August 4. 63 km. Total 6156 km. Tracy.
Ack! Only 63 km? Where did the day go?**

Only 63 km?!? I haven't done such a puny distance like that in a long time. Having a house to stay in really slows us down in getting ready to go. First there is the nice opportunity to have a shower in the morning and then you have to find everything to pack up. In a tent it is easy to keep everything together and when you have everything packed up you just need to look at the ground to see if you have forgotten anything. If there is nothing on the ground you know that it has to be packed somewhere. In a house it is completely different. There are a million and one places that you could have put something down and forgotten about it so packing up becomes a major endeavor. Everything needs to be collected, organized and then repacked before we can leave. The touring CAC book called for us to leave Montreal via the Champlain Bridge but since Chris and Karen had not seen the metro yet I decided that we could take the metro across the river and kill two birds with one stone, show them the subway and get across the river without cycling on any bridges. Well it did not end up being as easy as I thought. Remember how I mentioned how poor the access was to the metro stations? Well trying to carry fully loaded touring bikes down flight after flight of stairs (and me with my trailer), it was not a lot of fun. I had to separate my trailer from my bike and carry each down separately and then Chris and I carried down the bikes. There was one hilarious incident that occurred but I think that you really had to be there to get the full effect. I would have paid a \$100 if I could have gotten it on video tape. One of the metro stations had escalators going down and so Chris and I just pushed our bikes on, held the brakes and rode it down. Karen on the other hand had a heck of a time with it. She would get her front wheel on the steps (and it would be turning) and then she would step on but leave the rear wheel on the solid ground. The front wheel would be turning with the steps, she would be shuffling back to try and stay on the top stair while the bike when nowhere. She just could not bring herself to let the whole bike on with her. This went on for about five minutes and by that time she had drawn quite a crowd. I kept asking her to let me do it (pick up front wheel, slide rear wheel onto the same step as you are standing on and just hit the brakes) but she just wanted to do it herself. Finally a guy from the crowd could take no more and went and took the bike from her and rode it down the stairs. I was nearly peeing myself laughing, that made our day but I don't know if I can capture those images in writing.

From Longeau we took St. Charles to Boul. Mary-Victorian which in turn becomes Hwy 132. St. Charles was in poor shape but the Boul. Mary-Victorian had a bike path and Hwy 132 had an excellent paved shoulder.

Remember Claud from yesterday? Well today he was our rate limiting step. We had left the house at 11:00 and were making good time when we arrived at his place around 3:00 in the afternoon. He had invited us over for lunch/supper and like all good cycle tourists we never turn down the offer of a free meal. Steamed mussels, corn on the cob and specialty cheeses for the main course. Raspberries and cream topped with real maple syrup for dessert. By the time we had finished gorging ourselves we could not move without feeling like we would burst and had to just sit around and digest. By the time we left it was 7:00 pm and we had only covered 30 km. With a large storm brewing on the horizon we headed off and made another 35 km before the rain started to fall and we decided that it was too dark to continue. We did not find an ideal camping site, just an empty clearing off of the road, and yet I feel completely secure because I am with friends.

I think that I now know why serious writers tend to go into isolation to write. Since I have hooked up with Chris and Karen I feel that at times the quality and volume of my writing has gone down (and a couple days I have just done point form notes to fill in later) because instead of putting all my thoughts down on paper I have people to discuss it with directly.

**Day 82. August 5. 139 km. Total 6285 km. Leclercville.
An amazing sunset.**

1:00 pm. I almost did not get up this morning and I tried all the tricks in the book. Set my alarm, deflated my Thermarest mattress while still laying on it, even tossing my sleeping bag off to try and freeze myself. In the end it was none of these that got me going, instead it was my stomach. I was just starving and had to drag my sorry ass out of the tent to get some food (a true testament to the touring cyclists appetite considering the amount of food I consumed last night).

Right now I am writing this portion in someone's carport as we sit out a rainstorm. The weatherman was calling for thundershowers in Montreal today and for the last four hours we could see huge black clouds massing to the north but for the morning at least they stayed away from us. Right now we have been caught by the tail end of a storm and have ducked into a yard to wait it out. In this carport we discovered a stocked beer fridge and started joking about how we could explain our presence to the owners should they drive up and see us.

Us: <In English but with a bad French accent> Uncle Pierre, you are home! We've been waiting for you!

Him: Moi?

Us: Don't you remember us? It's your cousins from Vancouver.

Him: < In French> I've never seen you before.

Us: Oopps, we must have the wrong house. Sorry.

Him: French: Hey, what happened to my beer?

Us: Ummm.. See ya.

Again, I guess you had to be there but I think it is funny. The rain has passed so we are off again.

10:30 pm. Well here is today's road report. Up to Nicolet we had a nice paved shoulder. We essentially stayed on Hwy 132 all day except for a section around Saint Gregoire. Instead of turning left at the lights and heading toward Trois-Riveres we went straight along a rural road that headed toward Becancour. What luck! The whole road was designated as a bike route and was in great shape. We took the first left and continued to Wolinak where we turned left to Hwy 30/132. This is where the cycling got frustrating. According to the signs on the highway, cyclists were forbidden from riding on Hwy 30 even though that was the only route that we could take AND there was an eight foot wide shoulder! Since there was no other route that we could see we just decided that the signs meant no standing on bicycles on the highway (they had a pedestrian above a picture of a bike) and since we don't do any trick riding we figured that we would be ok. The funny/sad part is that as soon as Hwy 30 ended and cyclists were allowed back on the road, the entire shoulder just disappeared. I mean there was a sign saying "Hwy 30 Fin" and right at the base of it the shoulder stops. So now every single car that was going along Hwy 30 is now on Hwy 132, doing the same speed, with no shoulder and yet NOW they let us cyclists on it. Go figure. It really makes me think that if transportation planners had to ride their routes on bikes we would all have better roads. Later in the day there were also some fair climbs out of ravines that made it a bit challenging.

Tonight we are camped at an amazing rest stop just before Leclercville. We are right on the edge of a cliff overlooking the St. Laurent and as we arrived the sun was setting, lighting up the river and cliffs in a golden glow. I feel sorry for all those people stuck at home on their couches watching TV right now. It was another gourmet supper tonight, rigatoni with a tomato/tuna/salmon/corn/broccoli (a bit of everything sauce) as a main course. For dessert we heated up a huge deep dish apple pie and to wash everything down we had a great micro-brewed beer. (Here in Quebec you can drink in public places as long as you are having a meal).

Well tomorrow Chris, Karen and I part company again at Levis where they will catch the ferry to Quebec City while I will continue on to PEI. I have decided that I am NOT going to drive home with them. Instead of

pushing myself and rushing my visit with my relatives I am going to just take my time and see everything that I want too even if it means that I am still on the road well into September.

Well it's going to be another early morning tomorrow so it is off to bed for me.

Day 83. August 6. 112 km. Total 6407 km. Saint Vallier.

Title 1: What is with this rain? Am I in Vancouver still?

Title 2: A third (and final?) parting.

5:15 pm. Right now it is 5:15 pm and I am trying to sit out another rainstorm at a gas station. I am in St. Micheal (~30 km east of Quebec City) and only 3 km from the rest stop where I plan to stay the night. I was going to push on through the drizzling rain but then the sky opened up with a torrential downpour and I had to seek shelter. What happened to all my nice weather. Since day two and up until 3 days ago all I have had to deal with were thunderstorms that would blow over. Now the weather has become cold and overcast with rain on and off all throughout the day. This reminds me of home.

Today at Levis I separated from Chris and Karen for the third and perhaps final time this trip. Now that I have decided not to drive back with them I am not sure if we will meet up again.

Well the rain has died down so I am going to continue on.

8:00 pm. Ok now it is later and I have been at the rest-stop for the past two hours. This rest area is fit for a king! They have running water, cold only :-), and flush toilets! A first for the trip. To the back, left hand corner there are several trees near a fence so I am completely out of view and feel very secure. I took advantage of the running water in the bathroom and had a full on sponge bath. I cleaned my hair and everything, it felt great to get some of the grime off. The rain has now stopped and it is starting to clear which bodes well for riding tomorrow.

Even with the poor weather, today was a great day for cycling. Hwy 132 had a good shoulder for much of the way and with the road running along the St. Laurent River I had magnificent views of the water and cliffs of the opposite shore. As we approached Quebec City the Laurentian mountain range began to appear to the north adding a fantastic backdrop to the already stunning views. I expect the Maritimes to be something like this but with waves crashing against the beach. I can't wait. We did nearly get ourselves killed at the cloverleaf leading to the bridge to Quebec City. We turned a corner and had to cross 2 lanes of freeway traffic to get to one side. In fighting traffic we caught a glimpse of a sign for Hwy 132 and we had to cross another 3 lanes to follow it. Then we went around yet another bend and crossed another four lanes of traffic and ended up right where we started! Aaaahhhh!!!! All that for nothing! All three of us were so intent on not getting creamed that we misread the sign and took the wrong turn. To say that was unpleasant would be a huge understatement. On the second attempt we stayed on the left hand side of the highway which turned into a bike lane (after having to cross a busy highway off ramp). Phew, that was close.

With the exception of that little fiasco today I would have to say that overall Quebec is the most bicycle friendly province so far. The roads have tended to be in bad shape but the drivers expect and respect cyclists. I think that the governments position on road repair is let it all go to hell (they don't patch anything, the cracks and potholes are all open) and then in the election year they do a huge blitz of road work. One nice thing is that nearly every town we have passed through has at least some sort of cycling infrastructure and there seems to be a lot of people cycling (with the exception of Ottawa I see three times more cyclists in most Quebec towns anywhere else in Canada). It guess cycling is just a bigger part of their culture.

Speaking of little towns, all the small villages in Quebec are a real joy to cycle through. They all have a very European feel to them with many of the homes finished in stone or brick which lends them the aura of age (and since some of the towns are over 275 years old they really might be). The other neat thing is that no matter how small the town is, they will always have a huge Roman Catholic church, the spire of which can be seen for miles. A testament to the predominant religion of the area in days gone by. And speaking about religious items, the area we are now passing through is very unique in Canada so far. In Ontario people would fill their yards with plastic lawn ornaments and cutouts of animals and Disney characters but here they do something completely different. Here I have been seeing yards with small shrines to the virgin Mary in their garden. I mean small (2 foot tall) statues of the virgin in a cave right in the center of their garden. Other homes have full size (2 meter +) effigies of Christ on the cross set up in their front yard. Whoa, I really did a double take at the first one of those that I saw. Never seen people nailed to a cross in a yard before. Interesting.

Oh well, that's enough for tonight so I am off to bed.

Day 84. August 7. 148 km. Total 6555 km. Saint Andre.

Title 1: An awesome day.

Title 2: "The Knock" transcends languages.

1:00 pm. Boy do I ever feel great! I am writing this during lunch in Saint Jean Port Joli after covering 55 km so far. The route up to here has been easy and enjoyable. The road is mainly level and winds its way along the St. Laurent offering fantastic views of the water and the Laurentian Mountains on the north shore. All of the town along here are very picturesque with interesting little areas to explore. It is one such intriguing area that I have stopped in now. Saint Jean Port Joli is a town full of sculptures with all their galleries and displays. I was passing one place called "Sculptures en Jardin" at the west side of town and heard the most wonderful music. Intrigued I stopped to check it out and am I ever glad that I did. The owner has turned his yard into a sculpture gallery with paths winding through the trees and flower gardens leading to each sculpture and in the background he has the most wonderful orchestral music setting the mood. It was all so charming that I had to stop for lunch (apples and cheese, how appropriate). So here I am, sitting in the shade with a view of the St. Laurent and Laurentians while surrounded by the perfumed scents of the flower garden and uplifting music in the background. Se magnifique! I must say it again, the tourists I can hear whipping by on the highway have no idea just what they are missing.

8:00 pm. "The Knock" is successful again although with somewhat diluted results. I was planning on sleeping in a rest area near Saint Andre tonight but when I got there it was a private campground. Since I have vowed never to pay for camping again on this trip I decided to push on to the next rest area about 15 km further. Well I had only gone 5 km further when I decided that I was too tired and hungry to continue and had to stop. I pulled in behind an abandoned barn and started to set up camp while being pestered by mosquitoes. Then I thought to myself, "Trevor, you are an idiot!" Why camp with all the mosquitoes and no water when there are plenty of yards nearby? Now it is times like these that I really, really wished that I had more than grade 8 French but I headed for the closest door any ways

Knock Knock.

Me: Ummm.. Parlez vous anglais? (My attempt at: Do you speak English?).

Him: No.

Me: Je parle francais tres mal (I speak French very bad). Je sui Trevor and <point west to east> Vancouver a Newfoundland a velo (Hopefully something like: I am Trevor and am going from Vancouver to Newfoundland by bike). Can I err.... Campez? <point to yard>

Well even with my utter butchery of the language the idea got across and he let me camp in his yard. Excellent! "The Knock" (Tm) works in more than one language.

I will continue the road report from where I left off earlier. From Saint Jean Port Joli it got quite a bit hillier and there were some fair climbs but around Ouelle it leveled back out. The scenery between these two town was not as nice as what came before and after, just boring, same old farmland. After Ouelle the truly scenic farmland returned. Now I guess in an car you may find it hard to distinguish regular farmland from "scenic" farmland but on a bike it is quite obvious. Boring farms just look like farms you could see anywhere. Scenic farms have something different to offer the eyes. At the start of the day the farms were scenic because they were rolling and nestled between large hills to the south and the St. Laurent to the north. After Ouelle the farms were flat but still scenic because the plains were broken up by huge rocky hills that seemed to erupt from the earth. It was also really interesting to be able to see the church steeple of the next town just as you leave the city limits of another. This is in contrast to Ontario where there were sections where the towns were 150 km apart.

Speaking of farms, I had an eureka moment just now. All through Quebec I have thought that the cows here were just really stupid, I can't get any reaction from them when mooing at them. Then it hit me, I am mooing in English and they can't understand me. Now I wonder how you say moo in French?

On that note I will leave you for the night. Cya.

Well I WAS done but I have something to add. You know what I really hate? When you are just about asleep and then you look up and see a big, black, six legged shape crawling along the inside of your tent only 2 feet from your face. I don't know how these huge spiders keep getting into my tent but this has happened to me the past few nights. Now don't get me wrong I'm not afraid of spiders, I just don't like sleeping with them.

Day 85. August 8. 120 km. Total 6675 km. Bic.

Title 1: I'm gonna die, I'm gonna die, I'm gonna die.

Title 2: The road of Death straight from the fiery pits of hell.

Title 3: LOOK OUT FOR THAT CAR!

Title 4: LOOK OUT FOR THAT TRUCK!

Title 5: LOOK OUT FOR THAT RV!

Title 6: Aaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!!!!!!!!!

Title 7: Later: A horrible day redeemed by a smile.

1:30 pm. I am writing this at lunch because I have to take a break from the Highway from Hell. I have been continuously downgrading it as the day progressed until it is now ranked as the #1 most dangerous stretch of road that I have ever had the misfortune of riding. Worse than Kicking Horse Pass in B.C. (former #1) and worse than the nastiest sections of Hwy 17 through Ontario. Surface wise Hwy 132 was ok up until Riviere du Loop but after that it just fell apart into poor conditions and the shoulder disappeared. Even this was ok for 10 km because the traffic was light but after that 10 km was where the main provincial highway (#20), ends and feeds all that traffic onto Hwy 132, the one that I must ride. Mama Mia! I was sure that I was going to die (and the day is still young so this might be the last you hear from me). I had zero shoulder, only 2 inches of white line and even that was torn up in places. The lanes were so narrow that there was not enough room on the road for me and a truck unless he went into the other lane. Cars, vans, trucks and RV's were all flying by inches from my left elbow at 110+ kph and I was blown off the road a couple times by close passing buses. I have a very good mental picture of what a rear-view mirror would do to my elbow at 120 kph and I don't like the idea one bit. One francophone couple in a RV slowed down as they passed and yelled at me. Well by then I had just about had enough and I am ashamed to say that I lost it and threw them the old one finger salute (and not the friendly prairie one). Every once and a while the road crews will tease me by adding a huge 6 foot shoulder that will run for a while but as soon as you get your hopes up, "Maybe this shoulder will stay for the rest of the day", it disappears leaving you feeling more naked and exposed to traffic than before. Right now I am riding through

Saint Simon on one such section of shoulder, maybe it will stay for a while (Yeah right!). To top it all off the weather sucks too, cold and wet.

Well enough of a break, I have stopped shaking from fear now and it is time to get back on the road. What good is adrenaline if you don't use it?

7:30 pm. What a camping spot. This view is enough to be worth nearly getting killed a couple of times over. First with the continuation of the road report. As expected the shoulder disappeared 200 meters down the road only to reappear near St. Fabien sur Mer. The shoulder then remained until where Hwy 132 and Hwy 20 split again, Hwy 20 keeps the shoulder (but no bikes allowed) while Hwy 132 loses the shoulder and gets all cracked but is called "Route Touristique". Oh goody, that lets them let the road go to hell in a handbasket because they know most of the traffic will stay on the #20. All this garbage was worth it when I found my camping site. Biking with Chris and Karen has taught me that although knocking on doors is easy and you can get food and showers, you are likely to miss out on the most scenic places. Being in someone's back yard just doesn't cut it. Around Bic I started to get tired so I began looking for a place to set up camp. After a couple of dead ends I saw a promising site, a construction road leading up into the bush on the St. Laurent side of the road. Intrigued I explored. It looks like they are clearing the area for building a house (probably a million dollar one) and the view of the water is outstanding. So that is where I am now, set up just on the other side of a shale berm out of sight of the road. The only downside to this spot is the fact that the ground is all shale and I can't get my tent pegs in to set it up. I had to use rocks to hold everything and in a good wind my tent will probably fall down. As soon as I get home I am buying a free-standing tent and to heck with these pegs.

I learned something else today. Along my trip people often ask me if I ever get lonely traveling by myself. I would answer that no, I was never lonely because whenever I wanted company I just had to knock on a door and meet some completely new people. Well that all changed in Quebec. I did not notice it earlier because I was with Chris and Karen but now that I am alone I do. It IS lonely when you can't speak to anyone because of different languages. Today was really rough. The horrible road, crappy weather and loneliness had put me into a deep depression. Then like a ray of sunshine I met HER. I was in Trois Pistoles shopping for some groceries when a salesclerk came up and asked me (in French) how I was. Now I know just a smidgen of French so when I answered in French she started rambling on and I had to stop her and say that I only knew enough French to get me in trouble. "That's all you really need.", she said. "SHE SPEAKS ENGLISH!!!!" I shouted to myself. Finally I had someone I could talk to! I felt like a man lost in the desert, who after days of drought finds a cool oasis of water and I jumped headfirst into a conversation with her. She was really interested in my journey and impressed that I had made it this far (my ego at this point had swelled past the bounds of my head and was moving skyward). She said that she had always wanted to do something like that and we talked for 15 minutes before she had to return to work and I had to get back to biking. I walked out of the store on cloud nine. I tell you, it was a close call. A pretty face, beautiful smile and an intriguing personality, if I had stuck around much longer I think I would have been a goner. You could have just slapped a Fleure de Lis on my arm, a plate of poutine in front of me and started calling me Jean Pierre, I would never have left Quebec. Come on man! She speaks English, is gorgeous and LIKES cycling! What more could one ask for?

On that note it's off to bed. Pleasant dreams all.

Day 86. August 9. 130 km. Total 6805 km. Lac au Saumon.

Title 1: Last night in Quebec and the best sunset of the trip.

10:00 am. I was worried that the heat through Ontario might have wrecked my film so I went to a mall to get a roll developed. It was absolutely pouring buckets this morning and freezing cold so I am still in my neon yellow raingear sitting here in the mall getting all sorts of funny looks. Funny thing this bicycle touring. Here I am completely soaking wet with a puddle forming under my chair, I haven't had a shower in six days (sponge

baths don't count) and I have a weeks growth of facial hair. My hair is grimy, my hands are dirty, and yet sitting here eating doughnuts and a nectarine I am completely content. I am warm, healthy and touring the country on bicycle. Something most people only dream of. What more could I want? Hmmmm.. Maybe a beautiful Quebecois riding partner.....

Hwy 132 through the town of Rimouski is a complete nightmare. It is even worse than the roads through Saskatchewan. Heck, I have been on better dirt roads. It would not be so bad if I could at least dodge the holes but with the heavy traffic I can't move around and then, with the heavy rain, I can't even judge if it is simply a normal puddle or a two feet deep bike eater. It was so bad that the vibrations shook loose one of the clips that attach my trailer to my bike so when I stopped the trailer tipped over and bent the attachment hook. Good thing that I have been thinking ahead, I had a spare clip and after bending the hook back into shape with my wrench, I was back on the road.

8:30 pm. Another magnificent end to an otherwise poor day. To celebrate my last night in Quebec I bought a great micro-brewed beer called "La fin du la monde", the end of the world. How appropriate. I am leaving Quebec which to most Quebecois is their whole world and I drank it while watching the death of another day after offering a toast to the most ancient artist still turning out breathtaking sunsets after all these years. Again I have chosen to forgo The Knock in favor of bush camping and I am glad that I did (I don't really need a shower, I made use of the hot water in a tourist center washroom today. I wonder what the next person in the washroom thought about the bare footprints on the floor?). I pulled off the road about 10 km from Amqui and I am camped on the beach of Lac au Saumon slowly being lulled to sleep by the sound of the waves on the shore (and the beer).

The Hwy 132 from Rimouski was better than yesterday. To St Flavie, more of the road had a shoulder than not. Then heading east at Mont Joli the amount of traffic decreased and there was a lot of shoulder until Sayabec. There were really only three big hills worth mentioning. Well there was a small one into Mont Joli but then a larger, terraced one out of Mont Joli followed by a long descent. About 10 km further there was a good 8% climb and then one more big hill entering Saint Moise. Then in-between and after these hills the road was level or downhill. (Caveat: I had a 30 kph tailwind so at least it felt level or downhill to me, your mileage may vary.)

Tomorrow I will be in New Brunswick and I am really looking forward to it. The Maritimes at last! I can nearly smell the Atlantic now.

New Brunswick

Day 87. August 10. 135 km. Total 6940 km. Charlo.

Title 1: New Brunswick!

Title 2: Last 1 hour time change.

I am finally here! I have been looking forward to this since the day I left home. Reaching this point was the last milestone I had before getting to St. Johns and I have not been disappointed. I was so happy to be here that I did my little victory dance right in the tourist info center in Cambellton while singing "I'm in the Maritimes" to the tune of "I'm in the money". You should have seen some of the looks I was getting but at least one person clapped when I was done. Heck, I BIKED HERE, I'm expected to be crazy so why disappoint them. Plus it's more fun this way. Leaving Quebec and reaching an officially bilingual province was also an euphoric moment.

Back in Quebec, Hwy 132 was really quite good. From Causapschal to Routhierville (~35 km) it was pretty much all downhill (honest!) and through gorgeous county. You follow along the Matapedia River as it meanders down to the Atlantic. The river is nestled in a valley with rocky cliffs to the north and rolling green hills to the south. The water is coloured brilliant blue and green and is sharply contrasted by the sheer black shale walls of the cliffs that border the left side of the road. From the road I could see fly fishermen casting from the shore and drifting down the river is small punts. From Routhierville to Pointe a la Croix the trend was still downward but there were some small hills that had to be traversed. At Restigouche there was an excellent historical site and museum that was well worth visiting. In the bay right near Restigouche was where the last naval battle between France and Britain was fought in 1760 and it was here that the fate of New France was sealed (or so they would have you believe). The government has raised sections of the *Machault*, a French warship, and have it on display along with an interesting historical story of the time. I have heard that these ships could hold 150 soldiers and 100 sailors but I couldn't grasp the size these ships must have been until I saw the keel standing over three stories tall. At Pointe a la Croix you cross into Cambellton, New Brunswick via a bridge and from Cambellton to Dalhousie the road was in great shape with a large shoulder for 90% of the time. There were several small climbs but the climbs were short and the descents were long so I was a happy cyclist. This was where I encountered the bicyclists fallacy for the umpteenth time this trip. The fallacy being "Just because the road is great here does not mean that it will be good for the entire length of the province". As I biked to Dalhousie along the great road and no traffic I thought to myself how nice it was that N.B. maintained its roads so well. That thought was shattered when I left Dalhousie down speed bump hill. This hill was patched into a billion bumps and my bike threatened to toss me off like a bucking bronco.

I really wanted/needed a shower and laundry done tonight so I took advantage of being able to speak English again and did The Knock. It could not have turned out any better. The family I am staying with is just awesome and I had a great time talking with them and their little girls tonight. They were so welcoming that I am staying in one of the kids beds while they double up in the spare bed. Unbelievable!

Well it's 11:45 pm and apparently there will be a near total eclipse of the sun tomorrow so I will be up at 6:00 am to try and catch it. With the time change that means that my body will be thinking that it is 5:00 am. Ouch! But how many times in ones life do you get the chance to see and eclipse?

Day 88. August 11. 86 km. Total 7026 km. Salmon River.

Title 1: 7000 km!

Staying with that great family last night was just what I needed. Good company to strengthen the spirit and restore the soul. At the time I was feeling really worn out and run down but now I am ready to go and do another 2-3000 km to finish off my trip.

I was up super early to try and catch the eclipse but unfortunately I did not see anything. I think that perhaps a slice of the sun was missing but it was so bright that I really could not tell. It did work out ok though because I was up in time to head over with the family to his brothers for a bacon and eggs breakfast, Yummy! After breakfast they watched me pack up my gear and then each of the little girls gave me a gift for the road. Megan gave me a picture she drew and a clay worm she made while Chelsea gave me a big, coloured clay rainbow that is currently riding on the back of my trailer. Thanks girls.

Finally the cruddy weather I suffered through in Quebec has broken. Today was a great day for biking. It was warm (23 degrees) and the clear blue skies lifted my spirits. However, even though the terrain was only gently rolling I was having a great deal of difficulty with it. At first I thought that it was because I was so tired, which I am sure contributed, but then I realized that it was because I was low on carbohydrates. The meal last night was German sausage "hot dogs" and this morning was bacon and eggs. Great food but just not as high in readily accessible calories as granola and other high carb. foods. At lunch when I realized this I astounded even myself by eating 7 (yes, that is 14 slices of bread) peanut butter and marmalade sandwiches (my current favorite), an apple, a pudding cup and a package of chocolate. Wow. Once the sugar rush hit I had no more problems with the hills. I just flew over them.

The road so far has varied from excellent to poor and generally the poorest sections are found within the towns. Up to Bathurst the road was mostly good with not too many hills while Hwy 134 after Bathurst to Salmon River is in poorer condition with some occurrence of the asphalt wave. Traffic over the entire Hwy 134 route so far has been extremely light as the major highway (Hwy 11) runs parallel to this road and most tourists take that one. The scenery has been very pleasant although not exactly what I had been expecting. I was picturing riding along cliffs but instead most of the time I have been at sea level, cycling over gently rolling hills with picturesque farms to the inland and small cottages on the ocean side. The cobalt blue water of Chaleur Bay with the mountains of the Gaspesie peninsula were a pleasure to look at. The only negative thing I can say is how "touristy" the whole area feels. Most of the towns on the water feel more like resort areas than actual communities. Some even boast of having a winter population of 5000 but a summer population of 25,000. That is not a selling point in my book. That aside it is still a really pretty ride. It was along here that I met two new cyclists. They were two guys who had left Vancouver on July 17 and were going all the way across. We chatted for a bit about how the trip has been so far and in the course of talking about routes the CCA Touring book came up. Disgust flashed into their eyes, "You mean the Book of Lies?" Ha! That's a great description for parts of it. They had followed the books recommended route for B.C. and a portion of Alberta but then gave up on it. I am still using it to give me an idea which route to take but then the rest I do on my own by looking at a map and talking to locals.

Tonight I wanted to be on the water so I just bided my time until I found the perfect spot. A large yard and what looked to be grandparents playing with a grandchild in the backyard. I rode up, introduced myself and within the hour my tent was pitched and I am writing this. Any closer to the water and I would be getting wet. At this time of night having all the cottages along the bay is a nice thing because in the dark the cottage lights look like a string of pearls along the shore, reflecting eerily in the water.

**Day 89. August 12. 50 km. Total 7076 km. Caraquet.
What? Me antisocial?**

Well it's true that tonight even with a wealth of doors to knock on I opted for bush camping in behind of a public tennis court. The reason for turning down a possible meal and supper? I just needed time to myself to think about the last few days and plan the remainder of my trip. I also wanted to try and get to bed early tonight to catch up on the sleep I lost trying to see the eclipse. If I opted to stay in someone's yard there would be no way that I could do any of these.

The morning could not have started out any better, warm and clear skies and the older couple I was staying with gave me \$7 to go and buy breakfast!!! Wow, I am already being paid for telling my stories, maybe I should write a book.

The cycling today was much closer to the mental picture I had of the New Brunswick. The road climbed until instead of bicycling at sea level along the beach I was now continuing along large, craggy seaside cliffs with the surf rolling in below. At Janeville, Hwy 11 joined up with Hwy 134 and traffic increased accordingly with everyone going faster. Hurry up and relax seems to be their motto. Always in a rush to get somewhere so they can stop and have their vacation. There was not much of a shoulder but the lanes were wide and the road good. Between Grande-Anse and Bertrand is a historical site called The Historical Acadian Village. Here they have restored/replicated all the buildings of an Acadian town for the period between 1770 and 1890 after the deportation of 1755. Along with the restored village is the history of the Arcadians here on the North American coast. In this display they were definitely portrayed as the innocent and helpless victims of big, bad Britain but I just didn't feel that I was getting the whole story. When you are stuck between two superpowers, Britain and France, I don't see how you can remain neutral especially when on conquered territory. I also find it hard to judge 16th century acts using 20th century morals. To make an educated analysis of the situation I would guess that you need ALL of the information to make a decision on whether it was right or wrong and all I have been hearing is the French Acadian side of the story. It would be interesting to hear from the other side and when I get home I am going to try and do some research to find it out. It was still a really neat place to visit. Just my own 2 cents so no one go and get offended.

Here is the funny thing about doing tourist stuff. The reason I stopped to check out the village was because I was fighting a Prairie force headwind and needed to rest. However, after leaving the site I was more tired than I started! This tourist stuff is hard work! Walking around, fighting crowds, viewing stuff and reading the info. It's no wonder most of these people have big motor homes to get around, after three hours of this I was ready for a nap. I think that from now on I will just stay on my bike and view the tourist areas from the road as I go by.

As the day progressed the weather got continuously worse, a strong headwind blew from the south-east and storm clouds moved in. At Caraquet (the Acadian capital) the headwind was keeping me to about 10 kph on level ground so I just decided that I would call it quits for the day. I had only traveled 50 km but since I don't have any deadlines (Yay!) I will just consider today a rest day. Caraquet is a strong bastion of French language in New Brunswick, everyone here appears to speak it and not English. Acadian nationalistic pride is also very evident by the presence of Acadian flags and colours painted EVERYWHERE. Flagpoles, lobster traps, houses, you name it. At first I thought that this was the way it was all the time (and it might be) but then I found out that the 15th is an Acadian holiday and everyone here is celebrating it.

Now for soul baring time. The reason that I needed time to think my feelings out tonight was that today I received an e-mail from that girl in Trois Pistoles. I can't stop thinking about her. We only talked for 15 minutes and yet I felt like we sort of clicked. Maybe it was just the mindset I was in that day and being able to talk to someone in English that coloured my thinking. I guess that at heart I am just a romantic and will always wonder "What if?".

I have gone through the maps for the rest of my trip and have roughed out the remainder of my trip. I had been thinking of doing a 60 km (120 km roundtrip) jaunt to the Bay of Fundy to see the tides but the weather is so poor that I think I will just push on and can spend that extra distance in Newfoundland. I expect to be in Charlottetown, PEI within 4 days and will spend 4-5 days there visiting all my relatives and typing up the past months worth of entries (ACK! Am I that far behind again?). After spending ~200 km in PEI it is another 800 km through Nova Scotia to reach the ferry to Newfoundland. I am really looking forward to reaching The Rock. As much as I like these areas, they are a little too tame for my tastes. Years of habitation have left them

looking somewhat manicured and I am really looking forward to the rugged coastline of Newfoundland. As it stands right now it looks like I will be spending about 1500 km in The Rock before I am finished, September weather permitting.

Well there went my chance for an early bedtime so I better call it quits now.

**Day 90. August 13. 175 km. Total 7251 km. Saint Louis de Kent.
Another long day but more than worth it.**

Today was really a nothing day in terms of scenery, just conducive to putting your head down and pedalling. However, as usual it is the people that I am staying with that will make the day so memorable.

From Caraquet I got turned around and missed the exit for Hwy 11. Instead I went exploring and took Hwy 355 to St. Simon and from there cut across to Hwy 11. Even these New Brunswick back roads were in good shape, no shoulder but they followed the coast along the water. Using the sun as a guide (rises in the east, right?) I was able to work my way back to Hwy 11 and continue from there. These little mistakes can sometimes lead to the most interesting little areas and it is always nice to get away from the main route. Hwy 11 for the whole day was in good to excellent condition with at least a full 2 foot wide shoulder. So far, in terms of roads I would have to say that New Brunswick has the best. Now I mentioned the poor scenery earlier. That was the downside today and I call it thinking scenery (you are not distracted by anything so you just think). Nothing but mostly flat road going inland through the bush. If it wasn't for the lack of big hills this could be eastern Ontario. Around Miramichi it was not quite flat, more like gradual climbs and descents but nothing overly strenuous (at least for a cyclist who has traveled 7251 km <GRIN>).

All in all there was nothing too memorable about today until I found a place to sleep. I knocked once in town but was turned away so I headed to the outskirts. I knocked on a likely looking house (with a Canadian flag) and spoke with the woman within. She was Acadian and hesitantly agreed to let me camp and I thought to myself that I might have made a mistake in choosing this place (shower wise that is, if they appear uncertain about letting me stay I don't push their hospitality). Boy was I ever wrong.

I set up camp and started to eat dinner when the rest of the family drove up and invited me in to escape the mosquitoes. I was just in the process of making PB&J sandwiches when she asks "We have some lobsters left over from dinner, would you like one?" My jaw hit the floor, "I would LOVE one". So that's what I had for supper, LOBSTER! This is quite funny because when I listened to today's message from Chris and Karen (they update their answering machine at home everyday), they said that they had met up with the Carmichaels and were having a lobster dinner. Up till now I was feeling jealous but then I got a lobster dinner of my own. Unbelievable.

Uh oh, its midnight. I had better get to bed now. 240 km to Charlottetown, ETA ~4:00 pm on the 15th.

**Day 91. August 14. 101 km. Total 7352 km. Shemogue.
Title 1: Destroyed by the wind yet again.
Title 2: Boooooorrrrrrrriiiiiiiiiinnnnnnnnngggggggg.**

I certainly can understand why ancient cultures ascribed the power of the wind to gods and elemental spirits. Sometimes it is your best friend while other times it seems to be a malevolent spirit, set out to break you down and drive you into the ground like a bug. Every road I took today, no matter which direction, seemed to head right into the wind. South for 70 km on Hwy 11? Into a crosswind. East on Hwy 15 from Shediac (the lobster capital of the world)? Into a headwind. Turn left or right? Headwind. It just kept blowing and blowing. And as if the wind were not enough I had to fight torrential downpours all day. I mean the rain came down with the

same force as a prairie thundershower and yet lasted longer. The rain would come in sheets with such power that the massive raindrops would actually bounce from the road. At times it was coming down so hard that I saw cars pull over to the side of the road with their four way flashers on because they could not see anything at 100 kph. (Hmmm... Maybe I should not have been out riding in it either?) It was just like that one scene on the Truman Show where Jim Carrey is outside when the rain starts just over him, he can dodge in and out of it but it follows him like a shower head until it starts raining everywhere. I would be biking along with not a drop falling then all of a sudden I could see a wall of water coming at me and boom, it would wash right over me in a torrent. Now this was fun the first three times it happened but I quickly grew tired after that. It is a good thing that I have excellent raingear, I was damp and warm as opposed to being soaked and cold, Gortex is worth its weight in gold.

I had really hoped to make it into PEI tonight (~35 km further) but the wind was just too strong today and my left hip is bothering me. Plus, because it is getting late I did not want to risk getting caught waiting for the shuttle to take me and my bike across Confederation Bridge (the bridge is over 12 km long over the Northumberland Strait and you are not allowed to bike on it).

As for the scenery today? Boring just like yesterday. Hwy 11 was in excellent condition as usual but it just goes through flat bush.

I am completely beat so I am calling it quits for the night now (7:45 pm). I hope to make it to Charlottetown (~135 km) tomorrow, weather and wind permitting.

Another province down. Three to go. Hi ho, hi ho, it's off to PEI I go.

Prince Edward Island

Day 92. August 15. 95 km. Total 7447 km. Charlottetown.

Title 1: PEI!

Title 2: Bridge frustrations.

Title 3: PEI is NOT flat!!!

I had a great sleep last night and awoke this morning to find that the rain had stopped although the sky was still threatening. I was invited into the house for tea and got to talking with the two guys who lived there. I told them how tough yesterday was and they said I was in luck, there were three HUGE hills coming up and that I would not have to touch my pedals until I hit the bridge. "Yea, right", I thought. I had not climbed nearly high enough to coast for the next 10-15 km and I told them so. But they were emphatic, the hills were so big that you could not pedal up them when you came from the other direction. Since I had distance to do I just agreed with them and left. Sure enough I was right, there were three piddling descents and that was all. I will say it again, your outlook depends on what you are familiar with. To these guys the hills were huge but to someone who had crossed the Rockies they were nothing. I made it to the bridge around 10:30 and then the real hassle started.

Confederation bridge is quite an amazing structure. It is 13 km long and was built a couple of years back to replace the ferry that went from New Brunswick to Prince Edward Island. The bridge was built and is owned by a private company that has a fixed contract with the government for the next 30 years. In my opinion they broke one of the contract stipulations when I tried to cross but I guess I am getting a little ahead of myself. When I arrived at the bridge my suspicions were confirmed, you are not allowed to bike across the bridge even though there is a large shoulder. The company that runs it is afraid that you might break down or run into severe cross winds. Their contract with government states that they have to provide a shuttle for pedestrians and cyclists at a minimum of once every two hours. Well I waited, and waited and waited. Nothing showed up. That bridge is only 13 km long, I could bike that fast in under 40 min! I have a hot meal and a shower and a bed waiting for me at my grandparents place in Charlottetown and here I am, stuck waiting in this stupid bus shelter. One hour went by and I started getting mad. I left the shelter to try and hitch my way across but no one stopped. On the other side of the road I saw two girls hitchhiking the other direction and went over to share my supply of oranges with them and have a chat. They were from Quebec and had spent the summer on Magdalen Island (134 km North of PEI) and were returning home. I asked how long they had been trying for a ride and they said 45 min. Forty-five minutes! These were two very attractive young women (now why is it that after three months on the road I REALLY notice attractive women?) with luggage and no one had stopped in the last hour! I guess most of the people crossing the bridge are on vacation and people on vacation tend to be so wrapped up in getting from one place to another nothing else registers. I left them with some of my snack food, wished them luck and went back to shelter to wait for the shuttle. If two beautiful women with backpacks can't get a ride, there is NOT A CHANCE that gangly old me with my bike and trailer is going to get one so why even bother.

Two hours passed and still no shuttle. Two hours! I could have been nearly in Charlottetown by now and to make matters worse the weather had worsened. The wind had picked up and it had started to rain. My mood began to match the weather, dark and foreboding. Finally, the shuttle arrived and drove me and my bike across into PEI. Total time to get across the 13 km bridge = 2 hours and 30 min. Oh well, it could have been worse. As soon as I got across there was an accident and the bridge was closed for an hour.

You know how once you are in a bad mood everything seems to exacerbate it? That was me at the time. The wind, the rain, and the crowds, I was in a BAD mood with a capital B. The crowds you ask? I went to the travel info center to pick up a map of the island and I felt like I had entered an international airport! The crush of people was unbelievable. Tourists from Canada, from the US, from Japan, from Europe, from everywhere!

There were people all over and I was beginning to feel claustrophobic. I grabbed my map and fled to the peace and quite of the rainy outdoors.

Earlier I had planned to take the Blue Heron Drive (a tourist route designated on the map) to Charlottetown a distance of 85 km but because it was now 1:30 and I really wanted to make it there for dinnertime I decided to stay on Hwy 1 which would cut the distance to 56 km. I think it might have been a mistake. PEI is NOT flat. My dad grew up on the island and when I was young he would tell me stories about the island and always joked about their ski hills compared to ours on the West Coast. My mental picture was puny little rolling hills that would be a piece of cake, heck it looked like easy cycling from the map. WRONG! I hit three big hills this day going to Charlottetown and parts of them felt like 6-8% grades. Maybe they weren't really that bad but I was wet, tired, and angry and they sure felt tough. Perhaps being so close (only 50 km) and yet still so far (3-5 hrs riding) was what did me in. The rain kept falling and the headwind continued to fight me. I was starting to lose it, to rage at the wind, the rain, the hills. I was flush with anger and I was nearly crying with frustration..... "Wait a minute," I thought, "This is not like me at all." I realized that I had become mentally unbalanced and then it hit me. This morning I had expected to be at my grandparents by lunch and yet now it was 2:30. I had not eaten anything in nearly 6 hours and my brain was falling apart from the lack of sugar. I headed into the next store, bought a cherry pie and chowed down. I polished off the pie in no time flat and began feeling better almost immediately. With a full stomach and better spirits I continued upon my way.

Finally the hills leveled out and I reached the outskirts of the city. With less than 5 km to go I caught my second wind and started pumping the pedals with renewed vigor. Nearly there... food... shower... bed... Hey why does my bike seem bouncy? I look at my rear tire and sure enough, I have a flat. CRAP! I look up, look at the house numbers, and there is my grandparents house! I got a flat one block from my grandparents house! I just got off my bike and ran the rest of the way. There they all are! My Grandmother, Grandfather, Aunt and Uncle! I made! I am here! I survived! I was so happy to finally be there, to have a roof over my head for a while. It was great.

**Day 93. August 16. 0 km. Total 7447 km. Charlottetown.
An awesome camping spot.**

Ahhhhh..... A day off.....

The trials of the last few days have been forgotten. Today my cousins took me out sightseeing in their car and we drove around the island looking at the sights. We went up to the North Coast to check out the Cape Tyron lighthouse and I have never seen a more picturesque spot in my life. A white lighthouse in a green field perched on sheer red cliffs. If you have ever seen a picture of a PEI lighthouse I would bet anything that you are looking at this one. For those of you who do not know, one of the things PEI is best known for is its red soil. And I mean RED! It had rained recently and if you took the water from the puddles in a dirt road and put it in a bowl you would swear it was Campbell's Tomato Soup. When you are surrounded by freshly plowed fields of this red soil it almost feels like you could be on mars. I decided immediately that this is the spot that I am going to camp at when I ride past here on my bike tour of the island.

Driving was fun for a change. After being on a bike for so long it seems like we are flying along the road and the back roads of the island are a great deal of fun to drive. We took one road (Hwy 224) that felt like a roller coaster. Huge rolling hills that went up and down and up and down. I was in the back seat at the time and had to move up front because I was getting car sick. At the speed we were going it felt like you were lifted out of your seat when you went over the crest of the hills. Great fun!

When we got home I fixed the flat that I got yesterday and found a large sliver of glass in my tire. I learned that PEI does not allow plastic bottles for carbonated beverages. That's right, no 2L bottles of pop, no 500 ml

bottles of pop. Everything is GLASS!?! Seems the local bottling company has made a big fuss about that new fangled plastic stuff and so everything is in glass bottles. You might wonder why that's a big deal? Well anytime you are driving along and see a plastic bottle by the side of the road imagine if it had been made of glass. When glass hits the road it shatters and so along the major highways there is a good deal of broken glass just waiting to give a cyclist a flat. Oh well, I made it. I have a home for a while and I think I am just going to go to bed. Nite nite.

**Day 94. August 17. 0 km. Total 7447 km. Charlottetown.
MMmmmmmm..... Lobster.**

Just another day spent vegetating. My greatest weakness in life is books and unfortunately the room that I am staying in is just filled with them. I read until 4:30 am this morning which is much too late when you are trying to recuperate and build up strength for the push to the finish line. I spent most of the day just relaxing and visiting with my grandparents who I have not seen in nearly 13 years.

This evening we went out for a fantastic dinner at The Fisherman's Warf in North Rustico. I would highly recommend the place. We had an awesome lobster dinner with a 60 foot salad bar. I skipped lunch to build up an appetite and for dinner I ate 4 plates of mussels, a 1 lb lobster, a bunch of other food and 9 desserts. That's what I call getting your moneys worth! Bicycle tourists are a serious danger to the profit margins of any buffet. Thanks Nanny for the meal.

**Day 95. August 18. 4 km. Total 7451 km. Charlottetown.
Working hard at doing nothing.**

What can I say about today? I slept in until lunch and then went to the library with the intent of starting to type up the last months worth of journal entries. Unfortunately all the computers were booked so I just picked a book off of the shelf and spent the afternoon reading it. It was *The Firm* and I would have to say that I enjoyed the movie more than the book. Heh, I guess there's my deep insight for the day.

**Day 96. August 19. 0 km. Total 7451 km. Stratford.
Finally started typing**

The enormous task of typing up all I have written looms ahead of me. I had no idea that I had written this much since my last update and that I am this far behind. I am finding that I can type up about 3 days worth of entries per hour but if I have to do much editing and remodeling of the text I am much slower. If I have to completely write the day from memory using point form notes I had taken during that day it takes me even longer still. I keep telling myself that I ALWAYS have to write in my journal, in detail, THAT very night but sometimes when it is really late and I am really tired I just end up summarizing the day in point form with the intent of fleshing it in later. Unfortunately doing it that way ends up being much more work and yet lacks the detail that would be present if I wrote it up then and there. I don't do this often but it happened enough that it is going to take me a while to fill it all in.

**Day 97. August 20. 9 km. Total 7460 km. Stratford.
And more typing.**

More typing today. I spent about six hours yesterday, another eight today and yet I am barely half way done. I sure hope you are enjoying reading these to make all this effort worth while.

Midday I took a break and dropped into Smooth Cycle (Ask for Neil) in Charlottetown and spent a whole bunch of money on more bike stuff. The only maintenance stuff I needed done was to have my front hub repacked and

the rest of my money was spent on items that I have been considering buying for some time but only now decided to bite the bullet and purchase. I picked up a new cycling computer (my old one is on the fritz), a real rain cover for my helmet (the Best Western shower cap just doesn't cut it anymore), and invested in a good pair of breathable rain pants as the rubber ones I am using now are starting to let the rain seep through when it really pours. I also bought one of those new saddles that have a cutout in the center to relieve pressure on the main nerve leading to the groin. As I have mentioned before the Brooks saddle that I have been riding on has begun to give me numbness in my neither region and I am hoping that this new saddle will fix this problem.

In talking Neil I learned something new. The last couple days I have been fighting a rather nasty cold which caught me by surprise as up till now I have been healthy as a horse. Apparently this is such a common occurrence among bicycle tourists that it has actually been given a name, The Maritime Flu. It is believed to occur because most bicycle tourists eat tons of carbohydrates but because of expense and hassle, do not eat much meat\protein. This low protein diet does not have much of an effect until the tourist reaches the Maritimes (most go west to east) because protein (well actually amino acids, the building blocks of proteins) are required by the immune system for proper functioning and by the time the tourist reaches the Maritimes, all of their reserves are depleted so their immune system is depressed and the person gets sick. This makes sense to me and next time I will be sure to carry some supplements with me.

**Day 98. August 21. 20 km. Total 7480 km. Stratford.
And even more typing. 26,000 words so far!!!**

I am really getting sick of typing, it was another 8 hours today. Actually, I love reading my old reports I just hate the typing portion. I can now answer one of my old questions I posed to myself back in Ontario. Was it worth it going over Manitoulin Island and under Georgian Bay instead of continuing straight along Hwy 17? I can now answer with a resounding YES! Meeting that couple on the tandem near Tory Hill with the swim in the swamp, sneaking a nights sleep in a tourist centers teepee with the resulting early morning sunrise over the Georgian Bay, the hill from hell near Denbigh. All these are memories that I would not trade for anything and if I had just gone straight through I would have always wondered what I missed out on. Also, when I spoke with Chris and Karen about the route they took, they said that there was nothing overly special about Hwy 17 and that it too was extremely hilly and hot. To top it all off, since I have decided not to continue on to Newfoundland with Chris and Karen after all, I am will not even miss the extra two days that I spent taking the longer route. All in all I am happy that I took it.

I did make it to the library today and uploaded about a weeks worth of entries (5000 words) onto the site and am just about finished typing the rest, another 21,000 words! Tomorrow I hope to finish typing and start proof-reading what I have written in preparation for uploading this weekend. My goodness, I think that I am typing more words for this website than I typed for my entire undergraduate degree.

Riding to and from the library today gave me 20 km in that new saddle and man o man it is just killing me. My Brooks is nice and wide while this one is MUCH narrower and it is putting pressure where I didn't have pressure before if you get my drift. I am hoping that with time the saddle (or my rear) will "break in" and it will become more comfortable. Oh well, I would rather have a sore rear for a couple days than impotence in the long run. My parents do want grandchildren (and I want to be able to work at providing them <GRIN>).

**Day 99. August 22. 9 km. Total 7489 km. Charlottetown.
And more typing.**

Well I did finally finish typing up to the end of New Brunswick today and decided to call it quits for now. Unfortunately when I went into the library and tried to update my web-site the site that I do it through was

down and I was unable to do it. CRAP! All that work and now I have to wait to get it where everyone can read it.

I was able to check my e-mail though and I received one from that Dutch couple I met the day I reached Calgary over two months ago. Considering the enormous size of Canada I find it amazing how many people I have bumped into. The Dutch couple told me that they had met two cyclists as they were crossing the Rockies and wondered I had met them, their names were Chris and Karen! They did not know that I had already met up with them in Ontario! Also, earlier my parents had told me about a fellow named Joel who they had heard giving tour reports on the CBC who was cycling from Prince George to Newfoundland. I met him in Ottawa and Chris and Cathy met him around Sudbury. Then just today, my cousins from PEI who are driving across Newfoundland as part of their honeymoon camped in the same campsite as Chris and Karen! They recognized Chris and his sister by my descriptions and talked with them. It seems amazing to me that had any of us taken a different road, stayed at a different campsite, slept in one morning or took a longer break one day these chance meetings might never have happened and yet they did. Man I love bicycle touring!

Day 100. August 23. 88 km. Total 7577 km. Cape Tryon.

Title 1: On the road again. Just can't wait to get on the road again.....

Title 2: 100 days!

The most beautiful province?

Dare I say it? Could PEI be the most beautiful province yet? Perhaps my memory of the other provinces are fading but even so, the route I rode today was fabulous.

I left my Grandparents place around ten o'clock today because it is only 90 km to the Cape Tryon Lighthouse where I want to spend the night tonight. So far none of the side roads I have taken has had shoulders (except where they pass throughout the national and provincial parks). From Charlottetown I rode Hwy 2 past Dunstaffnage and turned north onto Hwy 6. The hills here were rolling and the road passed through picturesque PEI farmland, generally rolling green potato fields. I then stayed on Hwy 6 for ~12 km and then turned off into PEI National Park. This was where the scenery really picked up. The route through the park took me along the north coast ocean beach and the grass covered sand dunes were something that I had never seen before. From the park I took Hwy 15 back to Hwy 6 and stayed on Hwy 6 through Cavendish and Green Gables to New London. Cavendish and Green Gables are the two main tourist attractions on the island but to me they were the cultural equivalent of strip mines. In trying to sell the mystique of Anne of Green Gables, the resulting rampant commercialization of the ideal has utterly destroyed the very charm that they were trying to present. This area was a blight on the face of this fair province. Amusement parks littered the landscape and shops such as Ripley's Believe It Or Not could be seen in the strip malls along the road. One store even had a fiberglass shark bursting through its roof. Lucy Maude Montgomery must be rolling over in her grave. Disgusting, but at least this trash is confined to this small area leaving the rest of the island relatively unpolluted and uncorrupted. Although tourism is a large force in the economy most of the communities have managed to maintain their character under the tourist onslaught. Quaint little fishing villages nestled in inlets and bays and bed and breakfasts are everywhere which maintain the character of the region better than garish motels and hotels. From what I have seen so far, PEI has enough charm to fill a province ten times its size.

By six o'clock I reached the lighthouse that my cousins took me too earlier. To get to the lighthouse take Hwy 20 to French River and take a right past the boat sheds that sit on the end of the inlet. At the top of a little hill you will reach a T junction on a dirt road. To the right is New London Bay which has beaches and a light house but to reach Cape Tryon go left at the T junction for about three houses and then take a right along a dirt path to the cliffs. The work is well worth it and the view is breathtaking.

Tonight my campsite is perched five meters from the edge of a 200 foot cliff over looking the Gulf of St. Lawrence and 500 meters away is the Cape Tryon lighthouse. If you have ever seen a picture of PEI with the red rocky cliffs and a tall white lighthouse on a grassy knoll you have seen my campsite. As I write this its' beam rhythmically passes over my tent as it shines out to sea. I am in a euphoric mood tonight. I am like a wine connoisseur, I collect experiences to treasure and savor in times to come. My only concern is that the wind will pick up and blow me out to sea.

On that pleasant thought I will head off to bed.

**Day 101. August 24. 126 km. Total 7703 km. Stratford.
Saddle sores suck.**

Well my worries last night about the wind were well founded. Around midnight the wind did pick up and unfortunately it was blowing OUT to sea not in from the sea. Every hour or so I would wake up to the sound of my rain fly slapping against the tent wall as the wind roared past on its Northern journey. Next time, scenery be damned, I will camp farther away from the edge!

I spent most of the day on the Blue Heron Drive Tour (marked on the PEI provincial map) with some small modifications. Hwy 20 was somewhat rolling and the North Coast scenery was very nice but not as spectacular as yesterday, it was not as rugged. Past Malpeque I took Hwy 104 to Indian River then Hwy 106 to Hwy 2 and Hwy 1A. Hwy 104 and 106 were badly cracked but like most rural roads, traffic was light and I could dodge the worst of it. Here the terrain was mostly level and passed through plainer than yesterday tracts of farmland. Hwy 2 and Hwy 1A were in excellent condition with large shoulders but traffic was shockingly heavy after the peace and quiet I had on the back roads yesterday. From Central Bedeque I left the Blue Heron Drive route, taking Hwy 10 and Hwy 112 to get me back on Hwy 1. I road Hwy 1 to DeSable where I returned to Hwy 19 and the Blue Heron Drive which I stayed on until Charlottetown. The south shore route was impressive and the views of the sparkling Northumberland Strait beyond burnt red sand beaches and lush green potato fields is still shimmering in my minds eye.

The days are now getting shorter and one pleasant side effect is that the sun is now rising at about the time I am usually waking. I now get fantastic sunrises every morning without having to get up at some obscene hour. I was able to get some fantastic shots of a giant pink sun rising next to the lighthouse that I can't wait to see how they turn out.

It is amazing to me to think that I have been on the road for so long. When I left, the days were getting longer, kids were still in school and the farmers crops were just poking shoots out of the ground. Now the days are getting shorter, the crops are being harvested and the kids have been out of school for nearly two months and will be returning next week. These things just seem to sneak up on you. Have I really been on the road that long?

I just checked Chris and Karen's answering machine and heard that they have met up with their friends who drove across and they are all now on their way back home to Vancouver. Am I ever glad that I am not with them! There is no way that I would have traded the past two days cycling for anything. Actually there is one thing that I would love to get rid of. My new saddle!! If you recall I picked it up to replace my Brooks which was giving me numbness. Well I solved one problem and created another. The new saddle is much narrower than my old one and was somewhat uncomfortable at the beginning but I hoped that I would get used to it and break it in. Well it didn't work! Yesterday was uncomfortable and today was downright painful. My butt sort of hangs over either side of the seat (and at 6' 4", 160 lbs my butt is not that big) and the movement caused by pedaling quickly resulted in some severe chafing. Ouch! By the end of the day I could not spend more than 5

minutes sitting before the pain became too much and I had to stand up and pedal. I would stand until my legs started to give out and then sit back down for another 5 min. Needless to say when I got back home I put the Brooks back on and I will just try to figure out how to fix it to avoid numbness.

I am writing this back at my Aunts place in a nice soft bed. Oh man, it's 1:00 am! I have to get some sleep if I am to hit Nova Scotia tomorrow.

**Day 102. August 25. 0 km. Total 7703 km. Stratford.
A day spent recovering.**

I can't believe how sore I am today. I have not been in this much pain since after climbing though Manning Park in BC. Originally I had planned on leaving for Nova Scotia today but with the way my legs and rear are feeling I decided that I had better take a day to recover while I have access to a roof and a bed.

I was expecting my butt to be sore from the saddle but was unprepared for how sore my legs are. It was either because I lost conditioning or it was because I spent most of yesterday standing to pedal. My legs are just not used to cycling for extended periods of time in that position and I guess I really strained some muscles.

All in all if I had to miss a day this was sure a good one to do it on. The weather was a beautiful day for just lazing around, 29 degrees with a cool breeze off the ocean. I even got down to the local beach for a swim. The red sand and cliffs made a stunning backdrop to the ocean scenery. I called my friends at work in Montreal from the patio and when I described my day and how I was sitting in a lawn chair enjoying the breeze with a cold beer they were less than impressed. I wonder why? ;-)

As a side note to all you tourists out there. If every you bicycle around PEI be sure to carry enough food with you. Because the island is so small, no community is much more than 30 min to an hours drive from Charlottetown and its supermarkets. Because of this many communities don't even have a corner store so groceries may be few and far between. Also, be aware that most stores are closed on Sundays. Don't be trapped without food!

Hi ho, hi ho, it's off to Nova Scotia I go.

Nova Scotia

Day 103. August 26. 131 km. Total 7834 km. McArras Brook.

Title 1: Nova Scotia!

Title 2: I hereby swear to never make a joke about American tourists again.

11:45am) I am on the ferry to Nova Scotia! Eight provinces down and only two to go! I woke up this morning feeling a little better than yesterday and itching to get back on the road. The ride to the Woods Island ferry along the Trans-Canada was mostly unremarkable. Modern farms and a Hwy enclosed in the trees. For any of you who want to bicycle PEI but only have a day or two so spend this is the route I would recommend: essentially it is a modified version of the Blue Heron Tour done clockwise. Hwy 10 from the bridge north to Hwy 1A and Hwy 2. Then Hwy 2 to Hwy 104 and 104 to Hwy 20 and Cape Tryon. From Cape Tryon I would stay on Hwy 2 along to Hwy 6 (after stopping in North Rustico for a lobster dinner at The Fisherman's Warf.) Hwy 6 to Hwy 2 into Charlottetown then from Charlottetown just stay on the Trans-Canada to the ferry (or save 10 km by taking Hwy 23 from Rowel which is what I meant to do but I missed the turnoff.) If you have access to a car try driving along Hwy 224, it is a real roller coaster.

My reason for recommending the North Shore over the South? Well the whole island of PEI is very domesticated, very controlled. Nearly every plot of land is either farmed or fenced which gives it a somewhat tamed, manicured look. The gentle south shore suffers from this much more than the somewhat rugged north. Along the north coast it felt like I was transported back in time 100 years. The farms were all smaller and every one had a period (late 19th or early 20th century) farmhouse. And then there are the large rocky, red cliffs that seem to taunt the farmers to tame them.

Oopps, back to reality, here comes Nova Scotia. I have to go take a picture.

10:45 pm) I hereby swear never to make another crack at the expense of Americans. I met a really nice retired American couple on the ferry and when I mentioned my route they offered to let me spend the night at their cottage which was right along my way on the Cape George peninsula. I never turn down invitations for a meal and a bed so I accepted sight unseen. If this cottage was a hotel it would get five stars. It is designed exactly like I dream my cabin will someday look like. Log cabin construction with an amber/golden wood interior and huge bay windows overlooking a million dollar view of the Strait. Right now I am writing this out on their back porch by the light of a full moon. The crickets are chirping, the surf is gently lapping against the rocks on the beach and the moonlight is glistening off of the ocean turning the water into liquid silver. What an end to a fantastic evening! I had a lovely meal and watched the sun set, stimulating conversation, and then before bed, an outdoor shower under the moon and stars. All this from people who I did not know 12 hours earlier. Have I said recently how much I love bicycle touring recently?

Well it is late and my legs are still sore from PEI so I had best head to bed. But before I do I think I will just sit here a while and enjoy the view.

Road report:

From the ferry I took Hwy 104 to Exit 2 where I left the Trans-Canada Hwy and took a secondary road into New Glasco. Both roads were in fair shape with Hwy 104 having a large shoulder. The secondary road didn't have a shoulder but it also had zero traffic. In New Glasco I wanted to stay on Hwy 4 but somewhere through town I missed the turnoff and just ended up taking Hwy 347 to the Trans-Canada. I then stayed on the Trans-Canada to exit 27 and took the Sunrise Trail (Hwy 245) the rest of the way to McArras Brook where I spent the night. All of the Trans-Canada had a shoulder and was in great shape but was mainly inland through bush with the odd view of the ocean. It was nothing spectacular and next time I would probably take a more costal route

but I just wanted to hurry up and get to Cape Breton Island. Hwy 245 had some vicious perpendicular cracks but zero traffic and was closer to the sea. So far there have not been many hills but it is not flat either. Nothing strenuous by any means.

The end is now so close that I am starting to have mixed feelings about the matter. Happy about the chance to see family and friends again, warm showers, cold drinks and a comfortable bed. And yet I will miss the early morning sunrises over the ocean and the late evening sunsets darkening into a star filled night. I will miss the sound of the crickets serenading each other at night although not the screams of the crows in the morning. I will miss the feeling of accomplishment that comes after a long days cycling and the motion of the bike swaying underneath me. Most of all I will miss the adventure. Starting each day without knowing where I will end up, who I will meet and even where I will sleep. Each day taken completely on its own, isolated from all others. I'm going to miss this all right.

**Day 104. August 27. 98 km. Total 7932 km. Creignish.
Cape Breton Island. Four days to Newfoundland!**

The hospitality of the people I meet astounds me yet again. I awoke this morning in my nice soft bed to find that breakfast was on the go. Fresh fruit and porridge, yum yum. I sat around a while and talked over a morning cup of tea but the day was growing old and I needed to get back on the road. I gave my thanks, bid my hosts goodbye and started pedaling. Whoa! Where did this huge gravel hill come from? I remembered coming down a rocky road last night but I did not remember it being this steep. I pushed and spun my way half the way up the hill when on one forceful pedal I got a flat. Lesson learned: don't try to pedal up steep gravel roads with touring tires, they don't have enough traction so they slip and the tube gets pinched. Precariously balanced on the hill, it took me twenty minutes and two attempts to finally my tube patched and be on my way. A rough start to the day but the sun was shining and soon I was back on the Sunrise Trail pedaling East.

Today I did not complete the entire circle tour of the Cape George Peninsula but instead opted to take a shortcut directly across the peninsula and push on for Cape Breton Island. I decided to go this way because I really wanted to get onto Cape Breton Island and was becoming impatient. When I reached the junction for Hwy 245 at Malignant Cove my mind was still not made up on which route to take so I went up to a nearby house, knocked and asked for the opinion of the guy living there. He said that Hwy 245 straight across the peninsula was fairly level and a good road but not very scenic. He then told me that the road continuing along the coast was in poorer condition and had a lot of hills but that the ride was along the ocean. However, he said that the views from the road would be exactly the same (albeit seen from the other side) as I would be experiencing tomorrow (I was heading south on the west side of the Strait of Canso and tomorrow I would be heading north up the east side). With this in mind I turned off onto Hwy 245 at Malignant Cove and cut straight across the peninsula to Antigonish which saved me 30 km and allowed me to get onto Cape Breton Island today. Hwy 245 was in really good shape with very few hills. It did not have a shoulder but as traffic was non-existent this was not an issue.

From Antigonish to the Canso Causeway I then stayed on Hwy 104 which is the Trans-Canada. As usual traffic on the Trans-Canada was quite heavy but the road was in good repair with wide shoulders (although they do disappear in places) and the hills were manageable (bigger than I have hit for a while but the grades are fairly gentle). Near the tops of the hills I was able to see the blue of the Bay to the North and the hills of Cape Breton Island getting closer. I AM NEARLY THERE!!! That euphoric feeling I get when things are going well and I am excited returned with full force. When I saw those hills it was as if my strength doubled and cycling became effortless. Cape Breton Island was one of the spots I was most looking forward to and here it was! The day was warm with beautiful clear skies so the ride was extremely enjoyable even though sucking fumes from diesel trucks every once and a while would spoil the mood. I crossed the Strait of Canso by the only means available, The Canso Causeway (insert ominous DUM Dum dum sound.) It was quite a hair-raising experience. The

shoulder was very narrow with a lot of debris and the cars and trucks are moving very, very fast. Since it is essentially a bridge with water on each side, there was the definite feeling that I had no escape route and so I tried to get across it as fast as possible. From the Causeway I then headed north along the rolling Ceilidh Trail (Hwy 19) to Creignish where I am now spending the night. Originally, I had planned on continuing for another 10 km to a rest stop I saw on the map but when I realized it was a Friday night I opted instead to find a friendly yard. Remember, Friday and Saturday nights tend to be the big party nights and so I try to avoid any potential gathering spots. The best way to get out of a bad situation is not to get into it in the first place.

Now here are a few of my impressions of Nova Scotia to date. The first thing that struck me when I go off the ferry from PEI was that it was no where near as developed as PEI. It felt as if every single acre of PEI was owned and inhabited while here in Nova Scotia I see a lot of brush and bush and feel much more isolated. Also whereas in PEI most houses along the rural routes were well maintained, nice looking farm houses, here in Nova Scotia they are simply houses and appear to be poorer or more working class (just my general impression). Instead of farming I believe the mainstay of rural Nova Scotia is mining and forestry. Up until I hit Cape Breton Island the scenery was nothing spectacular although I should qualify that with the fact that I did spend most of my time on the Trans-Canada Hwy which is usually pretty plain anyways. On the mainland the ocean was out of sight most of the time and the bush on either side of the road walled me in.

From what I have seen today, Cape Breton is quite different. The road is elevated and runs along the sides of the hills which gives you a spectacular, unobstructed view of the water and what a view it is! Absolutely gorgeous. Looking back, had I not had those people to visit on the Cape George Peninsula (who were MORE than worth the side trip) I think that I would recommend taking the fastest route possible across the mainland (Hwy 104 or perhaps Hwy 4) and spending the time you saved exploring Cape Breton further.

I find it amusing how picky I am about where I camp. I have turned into a real camping snob, only the best spots with the nicest views will do for me ;-) This has not been a problem to achieve in the Maritimes as the people have been so friendly (and impressed with my journey) that I have been having a 100% success rate with "The Knock"™. Today I was biking along and getting tired but did not want to stop because "That yard is not high enough on the hill and therefore has an obstructed view." "That house is on the right side of the road which puts all the traffic in front of the house, wrecking the view of the water." Ect, ect. He he he..... See what I mean? Really picky.

Then I passed by one place. Left hand side of the road with an open yard and a beautiful view of the water AND someone was sitting out front. I wheeled into their driveway and asked. I was welcomed with open arms and so I pitched my tent under their back deck to avoid the dew in the morning and went in for a shower. After scraping the days grime off I went out and sat on the deck and ate my dinner watching a magnificent sunset over St. Georges Bay. I have been catching a lot of sunsets now that they occur around 8:30. This cuts down on the amount of cycling I can do in the day but since it is dark by 9:00 I at least get a good nights sleep. Which is exactly what I am going to do now.

Oh wait, one last thing that I forgot to mention yesterday. I now have a job lined up for when my trip is over! I had worked as a Research Assistant for Merck Frosst in Montreal in 1998 during my Undergraduate degree and had been in contact with my old boss since then. When I passed through Montreal a month ago I dropped in to say hello and inquired if he would be interested in have me come back to work for a bit. Well I received an e-mail while in PEI saying that there was an opening and we tentatively set a December start date which would give me plenty of time to finish my trip and relax for a bit before returning to work. Well after getting off of the ferry in Nova Scotia I called to confirm everything and found out that there was opening available now and that they wanted me to start as soon as possible. In fact the way it was put to me was "How fast can you pedal?" Well, I was not about to sacrifice the end of my trip to start work early so I requested an October start date and it worked out. So that is the scoop for now, my ETA for St. Johns, Newfoundland is around the third week of

September which will give me about one week to relax at home before flying out to Montreal to start work. Busy, busy, busy.

Day 105. August 28. 131 km. Total 8063 km. Cheticamp.

Title 1: 8000 km!!!

Title 2: Three days to Newfoundland.

Very tired..... Very, very, very, very, very, very, very, very tired. I just want to go to bed. I don't want to write anything now but if I don't I won't catch up tomorrow and it will just mean more work later and I am speaking from bitter experience.

Thighs hurt... Hips hurt... Calves hurt... Butt hurts... Even baby toe hurts... Legs are fried and the REAL climbs start tomorrow! I guess I have not recovered from the damage I did in PEI and doing 130 km today did not help the situation any. I figure it was the week off plus the poor seat that initially did the damage and then the continuous effort I have been putting out since has done the rest. I actually feel quite fatigued on top of sore so perhaps I am fighting a cold as well. Maybe all I need is a good nights rest? Something I am not going to get if I keep rambling on like this.

The road from Creignish to Port Hood was excellent, a good surface and a 2 foot wide shoulder for much of the way. The terrain was mostly small rolling hills with short, gradual climbs and a view of the water the whole way. It was quite easy. It was here that I got another flat on my rear Hutchison tire that I had bought in PEI to replace my worn out Continental Top Touring 2000 tire. This was my 3rd flat in 2 days and I was getting fed up and decided to put on a Top Touring tire I had as a spare. While I was putting it on a fellow in a pickup stopped to see if I needed any help. I said no but he stuck around and talked while I worked. Then another fellow in a pickup saw me working on my bike with the other guy standing around and HE stopped as well. Again I said I was fine but he too hung around to watch and talk with the first guy. So now there is me, two other guys, my bike and two pickups all pulled over to the side of the road. Then ANOTHER truck comes by and stops and he starts talking with the first two guys. It was a real party I tell you. It is nice to know that if I need help I will be able to get. These folks are extremely friendly. Which reminds me, when I woke up this morning I found that my host had made breakfast and so I sat down to a warm meal. We chatted and I learned that they had just won a contest sponsored by the local paper which asked for the favorite summertime activity. My host had entered "Sitting on the porch with a cold drink and trying to guess who it was in the car that honked hello while driving by." Yes, it is really true, people here honk hello if they see you sitting outside. It happened twice while I was there! What a great place to live.

From Port Hood to Inverness the road was still in good shape but the shoulder was mostly absent. It was also much hillier and the climbs got longer. By this time I was really tiring. While actually pedaling I was averaging 20 kph (slow going uphill but fast on the way down) and yet because of all the flats I had only covered 30 km in 3.5 hrs, a depressingly slow pace. In addition to all the flats the day was hot and humid which just sapped the energy from me.

On the map I saw that from Port Hood to Inverness the route was mostly inland away from the ocean and I though I was in for some more boring scenery. Was I ever in for a surprise. On the contrary the scenery from Mabou to Glenville was one of the most beautiful sections of country I have ever seen. And I mean EVER seen! At points I just had to stop in awe to take it all in, it was beautiful. Lush, forested rolling hills with crystal clear streams and rivers running through the valleys. Occasionally, the ocean could be seen in the distance. One sheep farm was in the shadow of two large hills with the ocean visible through the crack in the valley and the green hills were dotted with sheep. As I said, beautiful. It was so nice that I would seriously consider moving to this region sometime in the future. After Inverness, Hwy 19 was quite cracked and in poorer condition than before and the hills required a pretty decent effort to go up. To try and save a couple km

as well as stay on the coast, I left Hwy 19 at Dunvegan and took Hwy 219 to Margaree Harbor. Again, leaving the beaten path paid huge dividends. This little side route was in excellent condition and traffic along it was non-existent. It was also very scenic as well with nice views of the ocean. At Margaree Harbor I returned to the main route which was now the Cabot Trail and continued on to Cheticamp. When I started this morning my tentative goal was to make it to Cheticamp. This was probably pushing it as it was 131 km away but in most (larger) Cape Breton communities, Saturday nights are gathering nights where they hold a Ceilidh. Essentially a party with fiddlers and dancing and stuff. Since I was on the island I really wanted to catch some authentic Gaelic\Celtic music and because I heard that Cheticamp had some I pushed on. The portion of the Cabot Trail I rode today was in fair to poor condition, many cracks with no shoulder. Fortunately most of the cracks are in the center of the road where they did not bother me that much.

I arrived into town at 7:00 and started looking for a place to camp. Since I wanted to head out to a club after having dinner I started looking for places right in town so I would not have a far to travel. Well, it ended up taking me three attempts before I finally found someone who would let me camp. It worked out fine though because I was invited in for a shower and supper before heading out to try and find some music. Well I went to the place that was recommended but it was more Quebec folk music than Celtic so I just headed back to my tent to write this up and get some sleep. I am so beat that think that it will be a short day tomorrow to help me recover and deal with the huge hills coming up. Yikes!! It's already 12:30 am, time for bed?

Day 106. August 29. 47 km. Total 8110 km. Pleasant Bay.

Title 1: Now these are REAL hills!!!

Title 2: Two Days to Newfoundland.

Cabot trail is definitely not for novices. There are some real kick your ass climbs involved. I only did 47 km today because I did not get up until 10:30, wasn't on the road until noon and then the weather was totally brutal.

The day started off foggy and upon entering Cape Breton Highlands National Park the tops of the mountains were shrouded in mist. This lent a very Scottish feeling to the early part of the day and I would not have been surprised had I heard the haunting cries of bagpipes in the distance. After an hour or so it began to rain and I mean really pour. Fortunately, I was near a picnic spot where there was a covered shelter and was able to wait out the rain. From the park entrance just outside Cheticamp up until the Cap Rouge lookout, the riding consisted of mainly small rolling hills but man were some of them tough. I don't know if I was just really tired or if they were really steep but I really had to struggle on some of them, they felt a good 8-10%. It might have just been a case of the morning wearies though. Even with the challenging terrain the ride was beautiful as the road hugs the hills and follows along the ocean.

About 1-2 km after the Cap Rouge lookout the REAL work began. To get to the highlands you must first climb French Mountain which rises 455 meters in less than 6 km. That is a lot of elevation to do in that little distance. I have not had to climb like this since B.C. Heck, I have not used my granny gear in over 3000 km and my legs are really feeling it. Funny how after 8000 km and 106 days on the road I still get tired on hills, I would have thought I could just fly up them by now. After 6 km of heavy breathing, profuse sweating and a little cussing I made it to the summit. The effort was worth it! The scenery along this route took my breath away (figuratively and literally). Large rocky hills plunge through the road into the ocean below. Lush green valleys all around with their end and beginnings shrouded in mist. Some of these mountains look like they were plucked right from Scotland (and actually I believe that millions of years ago they actually were). From the summit of French Mountain you ride 14 km along the highlands which are unlike anything I have ridden through so far and have a character all to their own. Most of it was level with some small dips into little valleys until you reach the summit of Mackenzie Mountain which offers spectacular views of the Gulf of St Lawrence

and the Atlantic. The Atlantic! I am actually here and I'll be darned if the sea breeze isn't a bit cooler and saltier.

From the top of Mackenzie Mountain there is a killer 5 km descent into the town of Pleasant Bay. I am glad I don't have to climb that one on the way back!

Tonight I just opted for bush camping so I could get to bed early. I am tired of being tired. Perhaps all you fellow touring cyclists out there can shed some light on this. I am curious if you have ever experienced on long tours what I am going through now. I think that I am having a sort of mid-tour crisis, cyclist burnout, stuck in a rut, whatever you want to call it. Right now I am camped 2 km north of Pleasant Bay on a cliff with a stunning view of the ocean and have just watched another sun set and yet I just feel.. Well, blah.. The euphoria is not there. Have I seen so many magnificent sites and beautiful sunsets that they just don't move me the same way anymore? Or could it be that a combination of sore legs, headache, tail end of a cold and general fatigue is just bringing me down? I'm tired. I'm sore. I'm lonely. I'm thinking about that girl in Quebec. Almost feel like crying. But this feeling of blah is not constant, I get mood swings. Some of the views and mountains I saw today did cause me to stop and pause yet others did not. Oh well, I guess I will just wait it out and hope it passes.

Sorry folks about the poorer quality of this writing as opposed to my earlier entries. I guess my mood affects this too.

**Day 107. August 30. 100 km. Total 8210 km. Wreck Cove.
Giddy as a school girl. The joy of being on the road returns!**

The good feelings return. I'm back to normal, well as normal a crazy cross-country cyclist can be ;-) I believe a couple of things contributed to my current good attitude. First and foremost I had a good 10 hours sleep last night which I really, really needed. Second, today was perfect for cycling, crisp, cool and clear. I awoke this morning to find that fall had arrived in the Maritimes. The air was cool and crisp and the sun did not seem to shine down as intense as before. And on top of it all the scenery today was stunning. Large forested hills of Maple and Birch contrasting beautifully with the deep blue and green of the Atlantic ocean. The ride was challenging with two big climbs but it seems like I have shaken off the fatigue that had been plaguing me since PEI and finally recovered my mountain legs. Within the park the road continued to be in excellent shape and much of it had a shoulder. Outside of the park the road is somewhat more cracked but the edge of the road was generally good. I should qualify this by saying that right now the traffic is really non-existent as it is the Monday before school starts and all the tourists are back home. Cycling on this road during the tourist season would likely be a hazardous, hair raising experience. That said I would still bike it even if there were wall to wall motor homes (which apparently there are in August) because the scenery is too nice to miss. The climbs? Well there are a lot of them. From Pleasant Bay it is gently rolling to Lone Shieling (don't forget to check out a really cool Scottish Crofters hut built and maintained by the government as required by the fellow who deeded them this 300 acres) where I had to start climbing the 445 meters of North Mountain. It was straight up for 3.5 km, level for about 1 km then another 1 km climb to the summit. The first 3.5 km were by far the worst section today in terms of steepness. It took me a full 50 min to get up it. I would crawl up in my granny gear for 1 km then stop and eat 5 Oreos and drink a can of Coke. Then climb another 1 km then stop and sugar up some more. This was repeated several more times until I reached the top and started down the other side. WOW!!! Up until now the only time I have really used my breaks going down a hill was on Rogers Pass in B.C. Well I think that today I wore more off my breaks than I did in the last three months. The grade going downhill was so steep I had to lean back in my seat for fear of flipping my bike. It had to be a 15% grade at least! If I let off my brakes I was up to 60 kph in under 10 seconds. I would quickly slow down because there were so many switchbacks that had I not I would have gone flying off of a ledge. It was so steep that when cars would pass me I could smell their brakes burning. The views though were unbelievable. I can't describe them in words,

you will have to see them for yourself (or check out my pictures when I finally get them up). In Cape North I stopped for a meal and while I was sitting there chowing down a tourist couple from Quebec came up to me and asked where I was biking from. I told them a bit about my trip and before they left they gave me twenty dollars to buy dinner!!!! Wow, what a nice surprise! From Cape North to Neil Cove I climbed for 9 km then descended for 9 km. From Neil Cove to Ingonish was alternating stiff climbs with fast descents. This section was all coastline then I reached the final big climb of the day, Smokey Mountain. Compared to French and North mountain this one was a joke. The climb was a steady gradual 260 meter climb over 6.6 km (which is double the distance to cover ½ the height when compared to North Mountain), I did not have to stop once. Of course if you were traveling the trail in the opposite direction it would be another matter. Going down I had to ride the brakes again. Switchbacks, hairpin corners and a snake-like winding road made it extremely hazardous. At the bottom of the mountain I was pretty pooped so I decided to call it quits for the day in the next town.

Get this. Small (deserted) community of Wreck Cove (pop:30). Young, single mom living in a mobile home. Me, a tired (and smelly?) cycle tourist. In the city what do you think my chances of finding a place to stay would be? Here I was welcomed into her home and then she left with her son to visit her mom in the next town, leaving me in her house to have a shower and make dinner! I told you these folks are friendly. I had a shower, a shave and a good meal then talked on the phone (using my calling card of course) to some friends back home. She came home around 10:00 and I chatted a bit with her before heading to my tent to write this up and head to bed. The night is crystal clear and the stars are out in full force. The ocean glitters like a sea full of diamonds and while I was sitting here watching it I saw a fox meander through the yard not more than 20 feet away. Right now back in my tent I can hear the surf roaring in the background lulling me to sleep. Have I said recently how much I love bicycle touring?

Tomorrow I think I am going to have a short day. It is only 70 km to North Sydney where the ferry leaves for Newfoundland. It is a 6 hour ferry trip and the 6:00 ferry I could catch would not get me there until midnight which is much too late for me. I think I will just meander into town and hit the library to do some typing and then find a place to stay for the night.

Newfoundland

Day 108. August 31. 77 km. Total 8287 km. Channel-Port-Aux-Basques.

NEWFOUNDLAND!!!

Nine provinces down and one to go!

I made it! I really did not expect to be here today, I had booked a spot on tomorrow's ferry because I thought I would only get into North Sydney around 6:00 which would put me in Newfoundland after midnight which is much too late to find a place to stay. However this morning I flew down the road like I had wings. I woke up early and joined my hostess and her son for a pancake breakfast to fuel up and then I was off like a racehorse. The day was clear and crisp with a nice little tailwind behind me pushing me onwards. From Wreck Cove it was mostly small rolling hills to the free ferry that took me from Jersey Cove to Englishtown. From Englishtown to the Hwy 140 junction you climb gradually for about 4 km and then on Hwy 104 (nice shoulder) you climb another 4 km. If you look at the map you see that the road looks like an upside-down V. This is because there is a MOUNTAIN there! Ok, so the summit is only 260 meters high, in the heat of the day it felt high enough. From the summit you descend for 6 km to a beautiful bridge which takes you onto the first peninsula. Over this peninsula and the next I found that I seemed to climb for half the distance and descend for the other half. I felt really good today on my bike and the km just flew by beneath me. I went so fast that I ended up arriving in North Sydney at 2:15 in the afternoon, 15 min before the ferry was to leave for Newfoundland. Excellent! I just pedaled on down to the dock, paid my \$29 and drove onto the ferry a full day ahead of schedule.

The ferry ride was 6 hours long and even with the size of the ship we were rolling around a good deal due to the wind and the waves but I only saw one seasick person. The boat I was on was named The Caribou in memory of the ferry that was torpedoed and sunk by a German U-boat during the second world war. I guess it's a nice thought but a picture of a boat with the same name going down in flames hung in the cafeteria does little to inspire one's confidence ;-)

To pass the time I wrote a bit in my journal and watched two videos that were playing (better than an airplane) before heading up to the deck to watch the sunset. We were now well into the open ocean and the wind on the deck was unbelievably fierce. It felt strong enough to blow skinny little me overboard so I held onto the railings nice and tight. This was the first time that I had ever been out in the real open ocean and it was really quite the feeling to look around 360 degrees and only see the ocean swells moving slowly by. The sunset was amazing and seeing the sun dive beneath the waves was a sight I will not soon forget.

I arrived into Channel-Port-aux-Basques at 9:30 pm Newfoundland time (my last time zone change, +1/2 hour) and it was already pitch black. I let most of the cars get off the boat first but even with my lights and reflective gear on I still nearly got hit twice. I did not want to die here so I headed for the nearest houses to try and find a place to camp. Now I had heard that Newfoundlanders did things differently but this was the first time I saw it for myself. I could see two rows of houses carved out at the base of a cliff but I could not seem to find a driveway to the houses in the back. Then I saw someone drive up and go to one of the houses in question. They parked in the same driveway as the house in front and then walked across the lawn to the house in back. No walkway or sidewalk, just right across the lawn! And yes this was the front entrance, there was no way to get to the back of the house! Anyways, I had knocked at the nearest house and received permission to pitch my tent in their yard when I hit my second problem. There was no level ground! Their whole yard (as well as that of their neighbors) was completely on a slope! I found the flattest area that I could and used my clothes and bike bags to build a ledge under my Thermarest mattress to make a somewhat level bed and quickly fell asleep.

**Day 109. September 1. 108 km. Total 8395 km. Jeffrey's.
The home stretch!!**

11:45 am. I left Port aux Basques only 25 min ago but I had to stop now to write down my impressions while they were still fresh. I did not see any of the scenery last night because it was dark when I arrived, however, when I awoke this morning the sight that greeted me was astounding! No wonder Newfoundland is called "The Rock". Roads and yards are carved right into the rock face and hills and looking around at the mountains something my mind kept telling me something was wrong. I could not put my finger on what exactly was bothering me but then it hit me, the hills were all green but there were no trees! As far as I could see was simply barren ground, covered in lichen and moss and ferns. This was completely different than anything else I had seen so far and it really moved me. Many of the other parts of Canada were somewhat similar to things I had seen before. This land was all new. The very feeling one gets from the land is different. There was a sense of emptiness, of desolation that I have run into nowhere else. Standing alone on top of a hill looking out into this terrain made me feel small and insignificant. It was hauntingly beautiful and instantly gained a place on my list of favorite locals.

11:00 pm. Man o man am I ever tired. Gee, haven't we heard this tune before ;-)? As usual, the reason I am up late is because I whittled the evening away talking with my host again. As I mentioned earlier I did not end up leaving Port-aux-Basques until 11:15 as I had to stock up on groceries and visit the library. Unfortunately, every library computer in the entire province is down for somewhere between a week to a month because a vandal hacked into their server and deleted everything. Bastard! I really needed that computer access to check my e-mail.

Since there was no net access for me to be had anywhere I just headed out onto the road and became so awestruck by the scenery that I had to stop and write about it. Unfortunately, I had only just put my journal away and biked another 20 km when it disappeared! Back to BC/Ontario/New Brunswick BUSH! The road was good with a shoulder but had a general upward trend much of the way into a headwind. From McDougall Gulch there was a stretch that was mostly downhill or level as you make your way up the valley. Then there is a 2 km climb followed by periodic up's and down's as you work your way over the ridges bordering various valleys. BEWARE the tourist info road map put out by the government! It shows towns that no longer exist and in fact have been gone for over 30 years! Codroy Pond, River Brook, and several others no longer have communities so be prepared to have to travel an extra 10-15 km to get to the next town or carry enough food and water to spent the night in the bush. One nice thing that I have found about Newfoundland so far is that pretty much every little town and community will at least have a convenience store where you can stock up at. This is much better than NS or PEI where really only the larger communities had stores. Perhaps I need to stop here and qualify this information for you. Since I have been on the road for so long now my idea of a large community is likely a great deal different from yours. To me a small community is 30-200 people and large is upwards of a couple of hundred. I now view any community over 1000 people as huge and I actually feel a little uncomfortable with all those people around. I never realized this before but I would bet that 90% of the communities in Canada have less than 1000 people in them.

Many of the towns I have passed through so far have an air of troubled times about them. Empty streets, houses in disrepair, shops boarded up. It's quite sad to see the deaths of an entire way of life. It is comparable to the Prairies where a town dies if it loses its grain elevator, here a town dies if it loses the cannery or mill and so far it seems to me that many are loosing them both.

So far I have not run into too much trouble with Newfoundland accents, I think that the prevalence of television is responsible for the homogeneity of language. However there were two workers I overheard on the ferry when I came over. I swear I could only understand two words out of ten and the rest was just a blur. To see

what I mean check out this neat site on the Newfoundland dialect for some great audio clips:
http://www.sheridanc.on.ca/students/CSYS4001/mosschar/public_html/newfoundland/slang.html

Tonight I am staying in the back yard of an old man's place in Jeffery's. He fed me a classic Newfoundland meal of salt cod and potatoes then we had ice cream for dessert. Yum, yum. I had a wonderful hot shower and then made some phone calls home on his unlimited long-distance plan. We then spent the rest of the evening talking over glasses of cognac. I tell you, this is the life.

Well I am extremely tired and a little tipsy but I think I am going to change my route plans a bit. Originally I had thought about going up to L'Anse Aux Meadows, through Gros Morne National Park, which in total is 300 km along a single route and then try to hitch hike back or charter a boat or something because I did not want to spend another 300 km riding the exact same route. I think that I am just going to skip it, I'm just getting ready to be done.

Day 110. September 2. 128 km. Total 8523 km. Corner Brook. 60 kph descents!

Up a mountain, down a mountain. Up a ridge, down a ridge. Left round a hill, right round a hill. Up, up, up. Down, down, down. That about sums up my day today. I passed through two mountain ranges which means that I hit A WHOLE LOT of hills, over and over again. The funny thing is that I seem to be ending my trip the way I began; with British Columbia scenery. I have traveled all across Canada now and this is the area that reminds me the most of BC. So much so that I was feeling really homesick today. Tall, heavily forested mountains with large valleys. Lakes, creeks and streams all over the place. Even the way the road is cracking with age and use is the same.

Today's cycling was more strenuous than yesterdays. Yesterday most of my time was spent cycling up valleys and I only had to climb when crossing a ridge from one valley into another. Today was just the opposite. The whole area was hills and mountains that I had to circumnavigate. None of the climbs were particularly steep but they were longer than yesterday and there were many more of them to overcome. One nice thing was that the whole way I had a four foot shoulder that was in excellent condition.

Even with all the climbs and the late night last night I am feeling good. I guess I have finally recovered my touring condition after loosing it in PEI. I did run into a problem with my rear tire however. I have been using glueless patches on my tubes whenever I got a flat and today I had two of these patches give out on me. It seems to me that they work ok for a quick fix but over time they actually rub off the puncture and so I had to use the "old" style glue patches to re-patch the holes. From now on I will use the old, glue type patches all the time. A while ago when I used up my last Presta spare I bought a Schrader tube because that was all I could find. Well, I discovered to my chagrin today that a Schrader valve will not fit through the Presta hole on my rim, Oopps! Luckily I was fairly close to Corner Brook and fortunately they have a good bike store (T & T Cycle) and I picked up two new tubes there which should last me the rest of my trip. The bearings on the BOB trailer are nearly shot as well but I am nearly done so I am not going to do anything about them till I get home.

Corner Brook is a beautiful town situated on a couple mountains around a inlet of the ocean. The bay comes in from the ocean between two mountains and the town is built up the sides of the surrounding mountains and so nearly every house has a killer view of the water. Unfortunately I chose a bad camping spot and am unable to completely enjoy the scenery. I am camping in the front yard of the bike shop and the road I am facing is a semi-major one and I can hear the rednecks in their trucks roaring by. Ah well, live and learn.

I am definitely ready to be going home now. I think I have been alone long enough and need to see friends and family again. The scenery today at one point made me so homesick that it brought tears to my eyes. I think that

this is when a touring partner would come in handy in keeping these feelings at bay. Someone to talk to about what you are feeling and going through and have them understand. How does that saying go? Something along the lines of: a sorrow shared is halved while happiness shared is doubled.

In terms of road conditions it was not bad for about 30 km from Jeffrey's. Then it got really hilly to Georges Lake then less so to Corner Brook. If you need food, there is a Gas Station at Pinchgut Lake but other than that there is nothing along Hwy 1 until you hit Corner Brook.

**Day 111. September 3. 86 km. Total 8609 km. Bush near Hwy 401 junction.
From 25 degrees, sunny and a tailwind to 10 degrees, overcast and 30 kph headwind in 15 minutes!**

I was nailed by fickle Newfoundland weather today! At Deer Lake it was 25 degrees and sunny with a slight tailwind blowing up from the South. I could see this wall of clouds moving in from the North when I headed into the grocery store for some food but I did not think anything of it. I was only in the store for 15 minutes but when I came out the temperature had dropped to 10 degrees, the sky was completely overcast and there was a 30 kph headwind gusting in from the North. That cold, blustery weather just about did me in. The ground was level but I was struggling to do 10 kph. My face and hands were numb with cold and my spirits were dropping fast. I was having to battle with myself just to continue. The conversation went something like this:

Bad voice: Look this is just stupid. You have seen this type of scenery a million times this trip and you are freezing your ass off getting nowhere fast. Just hitch a ride for the 150 km to the next town and we can have a hot shower, a nice meal and camp in a yard where you won't be bothered by bears or moose or rednecks.

Good voice: But that would be cheating! I'm not hurt and my bike is not damaged so I have not excuse not to push on.

Bad: No excuse! You have traveled over 8000 km by bike already! What is a 150 km ride in a car? Just do it!

Good: That's right, it has been 8000 km so what is pushing on for another 150? Besides what would everyone think if I made it all this way only to wimp out and hitch when it gets a little cold and windy?

Bad: No one needs to know. Just fudge the numbers and pay attention to the road for the reports. Come on, it is time to be getting on home.

Good: SHUT UP! There is no way I am going to lie about anything.

Bad: No you shut up! I'm cold, tired and this is dumb. Let's go!

Well this little internal argument went on for a good 30 minutes at which point I decided that I would push on to the Hwy 401 junction and hope that I could find a house there but if not I would just pitch camp there.

Well after another 1.5 hours of hellish cycling I made it to the junction and.. NO HOUSES! Darn! I pushed my bike up the embankment at the side of the road and found a clearing out of sight where I set up camp (if you are looking for it, it is right near the road sign about 500 meters before the junction). I guess if anything, this little episode serves to show you where my mind is at this moment. First that I would consider skipping 150 km to get home faster, but second, that I could spend half an hour arguing about it with myself! Well I am neither a wimp nor a cheat so I just bit the bullet and pushed onwards.

The road report: From Corner Brook to Pasadena was 27 km of mostly downhill with a great 4 foot shoulder. This section passes through one rocky valley and then opens into a wide valley with hills to the right and an

ocean bay to the left. From Pasadena to Deer Lake the road was dangerous. There was a small shoulder in spots but mostly it was absent and the lane was too narrow for both myself and the trucks. I had to jump off the road and ride in the gravel more times than I care to remember. This part had a few short climbs. From Deer Lake to here (~30 km) the 4 foot shoulder is back and the road is mostly level with some gradual ups and down. The scenery from Pasadena to here was really nothing much to mention, just back to that old bush and swamp that I have seen a million times before.

Well right now I am so tired that even though it is only 8:00 I am going to bed. Oh yes one more thing. I started calling for plane tickets today and so far it looks like a one way ticket from St. Johns to Vancouver is going to be around \$600. Ouch, that's pretty much two months worth of food right there! Having cut off Gros Morne I have a little under a 1000 km to go which should mean 10 more days. This includes riding both the Bonavista and Conception Bay Peninsulas but I will see how I feel when I get there.

Day 112. September 4. 104 km. Total 8713 km. South Brook.

Title 1: Too stubborn for my own good?

Title 2: Glove and bootie weather.

I think that I am just too stubborn for my own good. I get from my mothers side ;-) Once I get my mind set on something I just work at it to the exception of all else. I woke up this morning and the wind was still blowing from the North. I headed out but soon had to stop to put on warmer clothes because I was shivering so bad. I had to leave my gloves and neoprene booties on all day to keep my hands and feet from freezing! At this point the little voice from yesterday came back.

Bad: Come on. It's freezing cold, you are going right into a headwind and the only thing that you can look forward to is 100 km of bush. Just hitch a ride to Gambo (~200km) where the towns get close together again and take your time from there.

Good: NO! I have to bike the whole way.

Bad: But you are already doing more than you had to do anyways! You could have just taken the 15 hr ferry to Argentia which is within 150 km of St. Johns and just biked from there. But Nooooo..... Instead you had to go and take the long route from Port aux Basques.

Good: (Now that last bit was a very good point but I wasn't quite swayed yet) But it will look like when things get tough I just wimped out and couldn't cut it.

Bad: No it won't! You can just say that you simply came to a point where you had overextended yourself and recognized your need for outside help. Nothing wrong with that and a good lesson to learn for life.

Ouch! He really nailed me with that last one. The good voice threw up it's mental hands and surrendered. "One really should know when they need help," I said to myself. So I stopped and stuck out my thumb Well wouldn't you know it? No trucks passed by in the 20 minutes I waited and then the wind died down a bit so I just got back on my bike and kept pedaling. I think that if it had been raining it would have been the last straw that broke the cyclists back. That has been my mantra recently "Look on the bright side, it could be worse."

Road report: Not much in the way of civilization today. There was a truck stop at the Hwy 420 jxn then a couple of vacation trailer parks along Birchy Lake. There was a camp ground ~15 km before Hwy 410 then gas stations at the 410 and 390 junctions. At South Brook where I am staying tonight there are a couple of corner stores but nothing larger than a mom and pop operation. The road today was quite similar to the road from Deer Lake yesterday, long gradual climbs and descents through the bush. There were some nice rides through lake

filled valleys but most of the day was spent riding through the ubiquitous bush that makes up so much of this country. There is a fair sized (2.5 km long) hill that you go down (YAY!) before South Brook that has an awesome view out into Halls Bay where you can see the cliffs and inlets of the Newfoundland coast. I really love being back on the water. Again I am reminded of the West Coast of BC with mountainous shores and rocky cliff lined bays.

I am simply sleeping in a nondescript yard near the water tonight. I was not offered a shower but the weather was relatively cool today so a simple hosing myself off with the garden hose and a face cloth was sufficient to remove most of the road grime I have collected. I did not feel like pushing my luck tonight but as it has now been 3 days without a shower I will need to press the issue tomorrow. Either that or get a little too close and upwind of them ;-)

Day 113. Sept 5. 143km. Total 8856 East Indian Arm Lake

Title 1: Riding the sugar wave.

Title 2: Burned by the map and car drivers (again).

I woke up this morning to overcast skies and a strong wind from the South-West. Of course I now had to go South so what would be been a tailwind yesterday was a headwind today. Sigh! Isn't that the way it always is? One fortunate thing was that it was not as cold as it had been the last few days.

Faced with the prospect of another day spent fighting the wind I thought back to how I survived the difficult parts of Saskatchewan and Ontario. I came to a realization that recently I have been doing two things wrong. First, I have not been eating frequently enough. When working hard and trying to keep warm I should be eating every hour to keep enough sugar in my blood to fuel my muscles and my mind. Secondly, I have been spending too much time dwelling on how bad the biking has been. Instead I need to trance it, to set up a story and play it out in my mind as I cycle. Essentially to daydream and in doing so, the time (and distance) passes by much faster. This combination worked great today. Between flying along on a sugar rush (2-11b trays of nanimo bars and 2L of Coke consumed today alone) and fantasizing, (SUPER TREVOR rescuing damsels in distress ;-), the day and km flew by.

The road from South Brook to Badger had no shoulder and was somewhat cracked. No real scenery to speak of just bush but it seemed mostly level or downhill. From Badger I turned East and the wind was now at my back. For about 77 km there was a shoulder which then disappeared most of the rest of the way to Grand Falls/Windsor. Grand Falls has two major grocery stores where food can be bought cheap and I really stocked up because tomorrow is Labour Day and I don't know what will be open then. From Grand Falls to onward it gets hillier than I have seen for a while but there is a shoulder most of the way. Out of Grand Falls you descend for ~6km then it is up and down to Bishop Falls. At Bishop Falls you have two choices and this is where I was lead astray by the map again. You can stay on Hwy 1 (which curves on the map, looking suspiciously like a hill) or take Hwy 351. I figured that Hwy 351 was the original road and Hwy 1 was the more recent bypass which is usually the easier route. I asked a woman in a parking lot which was easier and she said (with a straight face), "Nope, no real hills along Hwy 1". WRONG ANSWER!!! I had planed on disregarding her answer and take the 351 but it was poorly marked and I missed the turnoff. I should have gone back. From Bishop Falls this is what I did: Climb 7 km then down 3 km, up 1km then down 3, then up or level for the next 7 km or so. I heard later that day that Hwy 351 is much more level and very scenic with the only climb being the one required to get back onto Hwy 1. DOH!!

I made it to the Hwy 340 junction around 6:30 pm and after 138 km on the road and a bunch of hills I was pretty pooped and it had started to rain. Well that was where I ran into map problem #2. There was no community there! The map said there was BUT there most certainly was not. One km further there was a

Provincial Park but my stubbornness/cheapness prevailed and I would not pay to camp, especially as I would have to shell out the same amount to tent as if I was driving a RV. I had resigned myself to having to continue for another 23 km when at last good fortune smiled on me. About 2 km from the park entrance there is a wilderness cottage community on a lake. I headed in and knocked. Success! Beautiful log cabin right on the shore of the lake, wonderful hot shower and I could keep my food inside where the bears could not get it. Ahhhh..... Super Trevor is happy again.

Day 114. Sept 6. 106km. Total 8962 Glover town

My most stupid move yet (well running into the guard-rail in Ontario was pretty stupid too).

I don't know if it was because I was tired or if my brain was frozen from the rain and cold but I made my most stupid move yet today. Around lunchtime I stopped into a phone booth outside a McDonalds in Gander to call home. I brought my seat bag in with me which holds my wallet, keys and address book and placed it on top of the phone. Can you guess what happened next? Yep, after making the call I left and started pedaling. 10 km down the road (~30 min) I casually reached behind to check my seat. "WHERE IS MY BAG!?!?" OH CRAP! I had left it back in the phone booth. Now here is the amazing part. I had no sooner turned around and started pedaling when a car stops and out jumps the McDonalds manager WITH MY BAG! It seems that someone saw it laying there and turned it in to the nearby McDonalds and then the manager rushed out to catch me. Wow! I had \$170 cash and all my credit cards and ID cards in there, not to mention my address book with every place I stayed at so far (Value = absolutely priceless). Thank God for honest people.

Today was overall a poor day for cycling but it could have been worse. It was cold and overcast all day and the clouds let forth a persistent mist/drizzle that soaked everything allowing the cold to seep in. I could not see much of the scenery because of the fog but what I did see reminded me of Northern Ontario. Smaller, stunted trees and shrubs with rocks and lakes spotted about. The large number of hills reminded me of Ontario as well. Lots, and lots, and lots of ups and downs but really nothing over a km or two in length. At least there was a shoulder present the entire way all day.

I really hope that the weather improves tomorrow because I am passing through Terra Nova National Park and I have heard that it is beautiful. I have decided to skip doing the Bonavista Peninsula and just do the Conception Bay/Trinity Bay one instead. I was looking at the map and Bonavista has only 84 km of coastal road and 114 km of interior travel while Conception/Trinity bay has nearly the whole 200 km as coastal. As it stands, I am now 5 days cycling from St. Johns. I can't believe that the trip is nearly over. That I have really bicycled all across Canada. It just doesn't feel that monumental yet.

I arrived into Glovertown at 6:30 and I am staying in the backyard of one of the neighboring homes. I did not get much hospitality tonight but I think that it is really mixed blessing. Last night where I was offered food and a shower I ended up staying awake until 11:30pm talking whereas here where I wasn't even offered to use the washroom (I'll just pee behind their shed, he he he) I will be in bed by 8:00.

Day 115. Sept 7. 106km. Total 9068km Deep Blight

Title 1: 9000 km!

Title 2: Hills here, hills there, hills hills everywhere.

Deep Blight, Malignant Cove, Wreck Cove, Deadman Blight, all are Maritime town names that help you to understand what shaped the character of the people who live here. Hard times have come and gone and come again but the spirit and strength of the people remain. Tonight I am staying in the yard of one such person. She must be well into her 80's but as active and witty as someone half her age. I was welcomed with open arms into her home and was promptly offered supper. We sat and chatted over tea about family and Canada before she had to leave for a previous commitment. She gave me free reign of her house so I had a shower and called

some friends (she had unlimited long distance) before turning off the lights and locking the door behind me. Now that is what I call Newfoundland trustiness and Maritime hospitality. When I put my address book away this evening a \$10 bill fell out, something she must have slipped in while I was having a shower. A real gem.

Today was another challenging day. When it was windy, I would say "At least it's not raining". When it was raining, "At least it's not windy". When it was windy AND raining? Well then I just gritted my teeth and kept pedaling. Because of my early bedtime last night I was up early and on the road by 7:45. The woman (who would not let me use her washroom last night) redeemed herself by sending me off with some muffins and apples. I guess she realized I was not some crazed psychopath. From Glovertown, it was 10 km to Terra Nova Park and then the work began anew. Within the park you travel from one hill to the next and most of them pushed me into granny gear. They were not much longer than a km or two long but there were a lot of them. The scenery within the park was nice but nothing outstanding, mostly boreal forests and the occasional glimpse of the ocean. I imagine, in order to get the real nice scenery you would have to get on some of the side roads or do some hiking but I was not up to it today. Outside of the park I caught my first glimpse of the Trans-Newfoundland trail and went exploring. In talking with the couple 2 nights ago they said that when the provincial railway was shut down they removed all of the rails and ties and turned the gravel railway bed into a cross provincial trail. (They were also promised that in return for loosing their rail line the entire HWY 1 would become two lanes to support the increased freight traffic, but that has not happened yet as I can attest to as these 18 wheelers fly by with only a 4 inch shoulder to spare.) Anyways, I saw this trail going under an overpass and since I was feeling adventurous I road down the side of the hill and tried it out. You definitely need shocks and wider tires than my touring bike for this sort of riding. It is a hard packed gravel trail but it appears that ATVs use it and this has made it rough in places. I found that I preferred the road as I could do twice the speed and because of the close in growth along the trail I really could not see any of the scenery, so at Port Blandford I returned to the Trans-Canada Hwy. However, for those of you who want the real wilderness experience, either by hiking or mountain biking, I think that this trail would be great for you. The nice thing about it is since it used to be a railway the grade of the hills should be very manageable and every 60 km or so it passes through a town where you can stock up on food.

Fall is here now. I have been gone for three seasons now. I left home when the leaves were just starting to come out on the trees and now I can see the odd maple tree sticking out from the evergreens in a burst of red and yellow. Coming up towards Thorburn Lake there was a nice rocky waterfall creek that I hiked down to watch for a while and got some great pictures. There were more hills out to Clarendville (which has a Sobey's and a Wal-Mart) and since I was getting tired I called it quits for the night.

Day 116. Sept 8. 108km. Total 9176km Dildo

Title 1: And yes the towns name sounds like it is spelt.

Title 2: Head down, ass up, pedal pedal pedal.

The day started out with (surprise, surprise) a headwind. But today I was prepared. I was loaded down with enough sugar from Sobey's and Wal-Mart to send a hundred diabetics into comas. 2L Coke, 6 jumbo cinnamon buns with cream cheese frosting, 300 g chocolate bars, 6 pudding cups, 1 lb nanimo bars and nearly 1 kg (2.2lbs) of gummy candies. Yep, I was loaded for bear and planning on riding the sugar wave all the way into St. John's.

There was a good shoulder the entire way today and the hills were mostly smaller than those I hit yesterday except after the Hwy 202 turnoff where they were large and rolling. The scenery made my decision to take the Port-aux-Basques ferry instead of the Argentia ferry more than worth it. Especially the section from around Sunnyside to Long Cove. This area was back to barren ground scenery with rocky lakes to the left and right and the ground covered in moss and lichen. Off in the distance the ocean could be occasionally seen.

If you are ever out this way, as you pass through a large rock cut, look up at the hill on your left just after the rock quarry to see if my Inuksuk (stone man) still stands as a testament to my crossing. Chris and I when we were in Ontario vowed that when we were in Newfoundland we would make one and when I saw that hill I knew that was where I had to make mine.

I am in the best mood I have been in for a long time. The kilometers just flew by today and I am now within striking distance of St. John's. Had I stayed on Hwy 1 I would be 80 km away but instead I turned North onto Hwy 80 to travel the Conception/Trinity Bay peninsula. I passed through Blaketown and South Dildo before stopping in Dildo for the night. Yes it sounds like it is spelt. D-I-L-D-O. Even the locals get a kick out of it. Could you imagine being on a high school sports team here and traveling elsewhere to compete?

<Principal over PA system> "Listen up everyone. This afternoon at 3:00 there will be the championship game between our home team and the team from Dildo Senior High."

You just don't need to give high school kids that kind of ammunition.

In Dildo I waited until I found the most amazing spot on the water before going up to knock. It was a great family and they welcomed me with open arms. I ate dinner with them and then the local newspaper reporter dropped by for an interview. It seems that my hosts thought I would be an interesting note in their paper! In talking with the reporter she asked me if I could sum up my feelings about Newfoundland. I thought for a bit and then told her that calling it "The Rock" does not do it justice. It's scenery is completely diverse with forests and barrens, rolling hills, coasts and bays. I had to say that if I was forced to pick my favorite place I have traveled through on my trip that I would pick the coast of Newfoundland. Quite a statement!

Well I am wiped out so I am going to bed. Goodnight all.

Day 117. Sept 9. 106km. Total 9282km Grates Cove

Me: "Does that road go to Grates Cove?"

Her: "That one is just gravel and dirt, you want to take Hwy 70"

Me: "No, really. I want to take that one. Does it go to Grates Cove?"

Her: "Yes my love, it does". (Shakes her head in disbelief as I pedal off smiling into the rain)

Leaving Dildo I started hitting more hills and discovered a fact about traveling along the coastline of Newfoundland. Leaving a community you always have to climb a hill and entering you always go down one. Since Newfoundland was originally a fishing colony, most towns are all along the coast. In nearly every bay there is a community and I figure these big ridges in between bays served as effective barriers to the growth of a community so when it got to a certain size (or someone got sick of everyone else) another town would spring up on the other side of the hill. From Heart's Content the hills became more frequent and steeper but the additional work is well worth it for the scenery. In fact it was so nice I had to stop and write this section immediately:

My little aside: The communities along this portion are picture perfect and capture the feeling of what Newfoundland was years ago. The boats nestled in the harbor, laundry flapping on the clotheslines and the smell of wood smoke in the air all served to transport me back to a simpler time. The day feels like a crisp October day on the west coast. There is a nip in the air that bites at the nose and numbs the fingers but with my wool gloves on it is downright pleasant. The air is filled with the heady aroma of the sea and I had to stop for a while to watch the surf pound the shore; the breakers turn ice blue and green before being beaten into a white froth by the cliff. Today would be a perfect day to be curled up in front of a fire with a loved one but this is a close second. Words can not accurately describe the way I feel right now. There is a feeling of joy welling up from my chest and pressing upwards on my throat

Back to writing this evening: From New Perlican the paved surface changes. You lose the shoulder and there are quite a bit more cracks and bumps in the road.

In addition to the look of the communities, I have been finding the people here really neat too. I am continuously addressed by the older women as "My love" and the Newfoundland accents change noticeably from town to town. As you progress further North, the hills become rockier and the trees smaller and more stunted by the wind roaring off of the sea.

From Old Perlican I took the gravel road through Daniels Cove to Grates Cove instead of the paved Hwy 70. The road was ~10 km long and rough but it was worth it. I have to travel on Hwy 70 tomorrow to start down the East coast of the peninsula so why ride the same road twice? The call of the wild and unknown is just too strong for me to ignore. My title for the day was an actual conversation I had with a gas station attendant in Old Perlican while trying to find the right road to Grates Cove.

It was dark by the time I arrived in Grates Cove (only 8:00pm! I remember in Field, BC that it wasn't dark until 10:30pm). I was quite high up and could hear the roar of the surf and the house lights in the town were strung out along the cliffs like pearls. I headed towards the water and knocked on the first likely looking house I found. "The Knock" was successful again. Right now I am perched on a hill overlooking the bay and from here I can stare the North Atlantic straight in the eye. To the North there is nothing but water until you hit Greenland and to the East nothing but water until you hit Britain. With all that distance the waves have plenty of time to get BIG and the thunderous roar of the ocean is astounding. I was going to pitch camp on the ocean side of the house but they said that sometimes the wind is so strong that it nearly blows over their tent trailer. Well discretion is the better part of valor so I set up in the shelter of the back of the house.

The locals here say that this (and not Bonavista) is where Cabot first landed and local legend says that Cabot and seven of his crew carved their names on a local rock cliff. They have a plaque set up saying that in 1963 two men came and cut it out of the rock wall and drove off (in a blue van). In talking with my host about this he said that the two men were buddies of Joe Smallwood's (the first premier of Newfoundland) and that the cut out rock is now a part of the basement fireplace in Joe Smallwood's house. Of course no one has actually confirmed this but it makes a good story.

Two days to St. John's.

Day 118. Sept 10. 82km. Total 9364km Harbour Grace

Title 1: Where locals fear to tread

Title 2: "Because it's there"

I awoke today to the fury of a gale force Newfoundland storm. The rain against my tent walls sounded like someone had turned a garden hose on my tent and the roar of the surf pounding against the shore was deafening. Looking out of my tent I swear there must have been gusts of wind over 70 kph and the rain was falling sideways in sheets! Spray was shooting up a good 20 feet in the air from the massive waves pummeling themselves against the rocks below me. I sure am glad I took my hosts advice and camped in the shelter of his house or else you might never have heard from me again! It was almost enough to make me stay in my snug sleeping bag all day but I just resigned myself to getting soaking wet (at least with my raingear I would be warm) and set about having fun cycling in the rain. Hey, when the rain is being blown so hard that it stings when it hits your exposed skin, you just have to make the best of the situation. Picture this if you will: here I am passing through rural Newfoundland decked out in my police yellow rain coat, blue lobster mitt gloves and bright neon booties hauling a huge ass trailer through the pissing down rain all the while singing and hollering at the top of my lungs. Perhaps it was because I was so close to completing my journey but I was just in a

GREAT mood. As I passed through the towns people would stop and look at me as if I were nuts and you know what? Perhaps I was. It just made me sing a little louder, "I'm cycling in the rain. Just cycling in the rain. What a wonderful feeling, I'm cycling again." You know the tune.

Any ways, the road for most of the day was much like yesterday; no shoulder and poor conditions in parts. Most of the hills were not as steep though it did seem as if I went down worse ones than I had to climb. It was difficult to see any scenery in the morning due to the pea soup fog but from what I could see between Grates Point and Kingston I would say the scenery was not as nice as yesterdays. Here the houses all looked to be from the 1950's and not the 17 or 1850's like I have become used to seeing. However, after Kingston the views were marvelous with large rocky cliffs plunging 100's of feet to the blue/green sea below. From Salmon Cove I wanted to go through Blow Me Down (don't you love these names!) but the locals kept trying to dissuade me and direct me through Victoria. I had this conversation three times at least while trying to get directions:

Them: "But it's a dirt road, Bai!"

Me: "Yes I know. I still want to go there."

Them: "You have to go over dem der mountain!"

Me: "That's ok, I've been over worse"

Them: "You nuts?"

Me: "Nope, I've just discovered that the road less traveled tend to me more interesting and exciting than anything you will ever find on the normal, well beaten path."

When I finally got through their disbelief and obtained directions to the right dirt road, I headed out and started climbing, and climbing and climbing. Wow! It was so steep at points that I had to get off and push because in the loose gravel my wheels could not get enough traction to force me up. However, like everything else so far, the work was more than worth the effort. The view from the top was amazing, I found a blueberry patch and gorged myself until I felt sick, and now I can say that I have been to Blow Me Down. What could be better than that?

After returning to the paved road near Freshwater and just before Carbonear, I saw enormous waves crashing against the rocks near a point about a kilometer off the road. I hopped of the bike and hiked out to the tip of the point and spent nearly an hour watching and taking pictures of the surf. I am really having fun just taking my time. I am only two days easy riding from St John's so I don't feel any pressure to rush onwards. My experiences these last few days have resulted in my coming to the conclusion that I did not leave enough time to do Newfoundland properly. Now that I have seen what the coast looks like, there are so very many other places that I would like to explore. Next time I am back (and I WILL be back!) I want to tour the entire coast of Newfoundland. Every time I have an opportunity to turn off the main road I will take it.

I was just entering Harbor Grace when I tried to shift and my rear derailleur did not move an inch. The cable had broken and as the nearest bike shop was still several towns away I just pedaled in low gear to the nicest house I could find and knocked with the intent of staying the night and fixing it myself. Ahhhh.. Successful again and it could not be sweeter. I have a nice comfy bed, I had a great hot shower, I was fed and then given free rein to make some calls on their long distance plan. Woo Hoo! I also fixed my rear derailleur using the spare cable I have been packing for the last 9000 km. Good thing I have some mechanical aptitude because I pulled the old cable out without thinking how I was going to thread the new cable through my hollow chainstay. The smart thing would have been to tie the new one to the old and pull it through but like I said, I

did not think ahead. In the end I straightened out a clothes-hanger to thread some monofilament fishing line through and then used that to pull the cable through. Glad I got it worked out because only having one gear to get me to the next bike shop would have really sucked.

As a little bit of trivia, the air strip here at Harbour Grace was the one from which most of the pioneer trans-Atlantic pilots left in the conquest of the Atlantic by air. Even Amelia Earhart flew from here! There is also a great big boat, the SS Kyle, that sits in the middle of the harbour. And I mean, SITS! It seems that back in the 60's it had a run in with a iceberg that caused it to be brought to the harbour for repairs but then a big storm hit, the moorings broke and the ship drifted into the shallower water where the bottom got torn out. It was too big and heavy to be moved so they just stripped everything out of it and it has been sitting there ever since. It looks really neat though.

Well I might make it to St. John's tomorrow but with all the side trips I have been taking it might be two more days. It is now really, REALLY late, curse those electric lights! There was a good book just sitting on the shelf in the room I am sleeping in so I read the entire thing in 4 hours and it is now 2:30 am. Ouch! This was not the first time that I have stayed up too late to read a book and it certainly will not be the last. Let me tell you, there is something to be said for candles which force you to go to bed when they finally sputter out.

Well goodnight.

Day 119. Sept 11. 88km. Total 9452km Seal Cove T minus one day and counting

I realized today that I have become much less detailed about the hills in my road reports. I think it is because now that I am in such great shape I hardly even notice them anymore. Well I do notice them but they don't stand out like they use to. This will not be a problem for any of you coming from Vancouver as you will be in killer shape by here but to those of you crazy enough to start out in St. John's, I apologize. You are really going to have your work cut out for you. The scenery has now changed back to the mountainous, heavily forested hills from the barren grounds I was seeing earlier although in some section the rock is still very evident. There were more hills along this route than yesterday and they are different as well. Some of the climbs are really good grades (the one out of Harbour Grace Southside was the 2nd steepest of the trip so far) while as I got closer to the bottom of the peninsula the hills became longer with shallower grades. It still seemed like I went down worse than I had to go up, there's that good old reason to go West to East again. Now this reminds me, here in Newfoundland directions are reversed. Newfoundlanders would say that they are going down to Labrador or down to Grates Cove (at the tip of the peninsula) while in my mind, and in the minds of most "mainlanders," going North is "up" since that is the way it looks like on a map. Newfoundlanders will say that they are going UP to Toronto while I definitely feel that Toronto (and South in general) is down. What do you think? This is no big deal but it sure can make getting direction confusing as I found out when I told someone I was coming down from Grates Cove and they told me I was going the wrong way! (eg. "Sure there is a great place to camp, just head down the road." Errr..... Which down do you mean?)

The bays and coves along the "top" (ok, that's the only time I will use that) I mean the bottom of Conception Bay differ starkly from those on the Trinity Bay side. Here they are more like small inlets with large rocky hills to either side and some have a very fiord like appearance. I must say if I was forced to pick one place in Canada as my all time favorite (or at least favorite "genre") I would have to say that it is the coast of Newfoundland. I just love it.

My route today can be summed up in one word. Coastal! Every time I was given a choice, I took the coastal route as opposed to the inland route. From Harbour Grace I passed through Bishop's Cove, Bareneed, Bridges

and Harbour Main before ending up at Holyrood. I even did a side trip out on a peninsula to Port de Grace just to get a picture of the town because the entire peninsula is just one big rock and it looked so rugged and foreboding. From Holyrood I pushed on to within striking distance of St. John's but because it was getting late I called it a day at Seal Cove.

The last two days I have been going much slower for two reasons. First my flight doesn't leave until the evening of the 14th so I have tons of time and secondly, this area is just so beautiful, I don't want to miss on bit of it. I also spent a lot of time off of my bike today just hiking over the hills to find the best picture spots. This slowed me down considerably as what should have been a five minute walk would end up taking 45 minutes because of the wild blueberries everywhere. I could not go more than three steps before coming upon a mass of berries just crying to me to be picked and eaten. "Don't pass us by Trevor," they would call out. "We are plump and juicy and tasty, eat us" they beckoned. Well I could not help but oblige them. I swear I ate at least 4 pounds of berries today alone.

Tonight, my last night of the trip camping, I am spending in Seal Cove. It was about a 3 km detour to here from Hwy 60 but I just had to get away from the main road and back near the water. From Holyrood, Hwy 60 quickly became the suburbs of St. John's. Full of little commuter communities and I had to get away from the cookie cutter houses and get back to an area with some personality.

Tomorrow St. John's!

Day 120. Sept 12. 72km. Total 9524km St. John's
The finish line :-)/ :-((sniff, sniff)

I am done. Finished. Complete. I awoke this morning in a state of numb shock. This was to be my last day on the road. I had made it. Nearly 4 months and over nine and a half thousand kilometers later, I had crossed a continent. What does it feel like? I think disbelief and shock would sum it up best, not euphoria like most might think. I just can't grasp that I am done. I can't imagine not having any more distance to cover. My mind flits from memory to memory: camping in Field, fighting the wind in Saskatchewan, climbing Hell Hill in Ontario. It almost seems like they are memories from a dream. Events that happened a million years ago and yet also just like yesterday. An impossible contradiction? You try it and let me know how you feel.

I now understand how Marco could stay on the road for nearly three years and over 30,000 km. The days just blur together and it gets easy. I have not had a day off since leaving PEI nearly 2000 km ago and yet I have been climbing hills that would have killed me at the start. I have been going up them as if they are not even there!

Fittingly for my last day, Mother Nature blessed me with a sweet tailwind that blew me all the way to my finish line so be warned, what I feel was level or downhill really might not have been. From Seal Cove to St. John's was mostly downhill. I cringed upon entering the suburbs but what could I do? I now only have one route to get me to where I have to go.

It was early when I arrived in St. John's so I pushed on through the city and continued onto Cape Spear, the most Eastern point of North America. It was 15 km from town and all ups and downs. From the city there was a tough 2 1/4 km climb then 3 km down followed by ~2 km up then a gradual 4 km down then 1.5 km up and another 1.5 down. On the way back you have to take the same road so you hit it all in reverse! I was completely shocked to climb the 2 km from downtown St. John's over a hill and find complete and utter wilderness. I mean there was nothing but bush as far as the eye could see. If this were Vancouver or any other city, this area would be completely developed by now with monster homes and mansions eating up the best

views. I imagine it must be great to live downtown and still be a 5 min drive from fantastic hiking and camping.

Along the route I passed through the community of Blackhead and noticed that it had a very nice rocky beach that and would make for some great victory shots in the water. I was going to stop and take some pictures on the way back from Cape Spear but when I did, the weather had changed and it was nowhere near as nice. You would have thought I would have learned by now, I have never, ever regretted taking an extra picture.

Cape Spear was nice but foggy. Don't expect to be able to get down to the water because they have much of the area fenced off and I am not sure you would want to go there even if you could. The waves are gigantic and slam against the rocks generating a huge spray. Many people have died because they were out on a rock when a large swell hit and swept them out to sea. At a water temperature of 4 degrees you don't last very long. While I was watching the waves I saw an old three masted sailing ship (~60+ feet long) slowly heading toward St. Johns. It was as if I had been suddenly transported 200 years back in time. Where I was standing, I don't believe that anything has changed in hundreds of years and I could picture what the area must have looked like when it was a bustling seaport. It was a neat feeling.

On my return to town I cycled the South side of the harbour to get some photos of the houses perched on the rocks and then headed up the North side of the harbour to the top of Signal Hill which offered an amazing view of the city and the Atlantic. At the top there was also a series of signposts with directions and distances to major cities all over the world: London 3733 km, Moscow 5149 km, Prague, Australia. Of course all the distances were as the crow flies but there was not one that I could not have biked to with the distance I have done.

Signal Hill is named as such because in the old days flags were hoisted on a yard-arm, telling merchants which ships were approaching the harbour, giving them time to prepare docking facilities. It is also the location where Guglielmo Marconi received the first transatlantic wireless message. Because the hill is located at the entrance of the harbour, it was also a site of strategic importance and was a major site of harbour defenses from the 18th century through to the Second World War. I learned that at the end of World War II a German U-boat actually fired two torpedoes into the harbour! Very cool. I must also say that in terms of physical location, Vancouver and St. John's have to be the most beautiful cities I have seen.

With my sight seeing complete I then headed on to my home for the next two days. I am currently staying with a great guy right in St. John's that I met through someone from the touring@phred.org mailing list. I just sent out an e-mail asking if anyone lived in St. John's and wouldn't mind putting me up for two days and as usual they came through for me. Thanks guys!

Day 121. Sept 13. 0 km. Total 9524km St. John's Touring St. John's on foot

Today my host and I went down to Quidi Vidi, a small fishing village that is in the North-West corner of St. John's to take my victory photos. I waded into the water at the wharf and held my bike up over my head in a victory pose while he shot off a roll of film. Funny, the bike felt light at the start but by about photo fifteen I was telling him just to wind and shoot as fast as possible because it was getting really heavy. I will be getting triplicates of that roll to send a copy of those photos with a thank-you note to everyone I stayed with on my journey.

With that job done we then went hunting for packing materials, specifically boxes for my bike and trailer so that I can mail them to Montreal where I will be starting work in October. While phoning around I discovered something that you should be aware of, bike boxes may be very hard to find! I had not even thought about it

but of course, St. John's tends to be the end-point for most cross-Country cyclists and they ALL try to get bike boxes to ship their bikes in. Then to make matters worse, because this is early September, all the students who moved away to go to University have taken whatever boxes remained for moving their bikes as well. Luckily, after calling six or seven stores, I finally found someone who had just received a box and we picked it up and organized all my gear. In total, I got everything into two huge boxes and each were exactly the maximum dimensions for shipping by mail (well perhaps a bit over in places). When we went to drop them off at Canada-Post to have them mailed to Montreal I made sure I smiled a lot at the lady measuring and weighing them and she graciously let them pass. Phew, I did not want to have to unpack anything. Canada-Post is definitely the best way to send it, two boxes with a total weight of over a hundred and ten pounds was mailed for only \$65.

Day 122. Sept 14. 0 km. Total 9524km Vancouver Going home

Well that's it. I am in the airport now just waiting for my plane that will take me home. In nine hours I will be back to the point I left four months ago. It's funny how things can change. Remember that fellow I met in Castlegar who had been on the road for 2 years, 7 months, 31,000 km and I thought he was crazy? Well I now know that he is not. If I had the money and the time I would be very tempted to just point my bike South and head down the East coast of the US. Perhaps take a right at Florida and head for South America and then..... It would be so easy to keep going but I now have a job waiting and a medical degree to obtain. The chains of life are slowly wrapping themselves about me again.

I do have some regrets from this trip and most of them center around Newfoundland. I am sorry now that I did not cycle Gros Morne up to L'Anse aux Meadows. I missed doing the loop from Norris Arm to Gambo, I did not do the Bonavista Peninsula and I still want to see the Avalon Peninsula. I WILL BE BACK!

Now one of the main questions that keep coming up in e-mail to me is: "What ever happened about that girl in Quebec? Your moving to Montreal right?". Well I recently received an e-mail from her..... From her husbands computer.... DOH!!!! "I swear officer I didn't see any ring!" Ah well, that's life for you, always full of little surprises.

I really hope that you have enjoyed reading about this trip as much as I did doing it. Some days it was really tough to keep going but I know now that having come this far, through all the trials and tribulations, I can take on anything that life will ever throw at me. Head down, tail up, pedal pedal pedal!!!

May your skies always be clear and the wind at your back,

Trevor Hennessey

P.S. Now that the typing is done I will get on scanning in a whole bunch of my pictures. It never ends ;-) You can view the ones I have up by clicking on the camera at: <http://www.anexplorationofcanada.bravepages.com/>