

1.0 DH and Lara depart on the road trip

August 2nd, first (un)official day of roadtripping.

Left home around 11 am and encountered our first construction. The westy pulled through just fine with flying colours. We hit this yummy local café for a delicious lunch and latte. The coffee they use is organic and fair trade...wow! And the selection of chocolates were incredible...not to mention the display of artwork on the walls. We are already so impressed with this place. We hope to come back for a longer time. The rest of the day and evening we spent at a stupendous local market.



It was warm and sunny, even hot at times, and the people were so friendly. Some locals sat with us at lunch, and we ended up seeing them again at the market. (it's just that kind of place) Sure hope we can meet up once more before we leave here. They were lots of fun and really into games, just like us!

We are presently headed north towards the famous lake in the area called Laberge. I know we should be headed south, but everyone is saying that is definitely not a place to miss. We've got a small cabin for a couple of nights, with access to a canoe and lovely bay for paddling. Can't wait to get there. We've got happy hour chilling! The clouds are beautiful around here, and it's still so light. This is great inspiration for me. We are getting close, and I need to navigate now, we don't want to miss the turn. I'm supposed to be looking for a flower sign or something.

All for now, from the peace-mobile....



2.0 Untitled

Well the cabin was everything we thought it would be and more. It really felt like home! Morning lattes in the meadow, watching the birds, and suppers on the deck, with nary a mosquito to bug us. All I could think is that this would be a perfect place for an artist's studio! (*it was our home...DH*)



We left there after 2 nights, fully loaded with fresh veggies. The people who rented us the place have an amazing garden. The little fridge in the camper is stuffed with beets, carrots, potatoes, cukes, zukes, and I have only now finished shelling a nice bag of peas that we'll have for supper.

Our first stop was 705 Jarvis street, to meet up with our friends Forest and Georgi, the same folks we had lunch with! They invited us to camp in their back alley...and we showed up just in time for happy hour on the deck and char and turkey breast on the barbie! A few amaretto sours later, and a couple pieces of rhubarb cake, (aka...rhubarb-dubarb) and I was seriously having second thoughts about leaving this place.

At long last we are indeed headed south on the Alaska highway, with 173 miles on board. We are driving in comfort in an '83 Volkswagen Westfalia...it's a Vanagon, and can also be referred to as a VW, V-Dub, or Westy, or just plain bus. Ours is a lovely creamy terra-cotta, with a pop-up top



where you can sleep. There is a second bed/seat down below, a small fridge and propane stove top. We have a water tank, and a few cupboards, and almost as much space as our cabin!

It's the perfect vehicle for a road trip east to visit family and friends and see this huge country of ours once more. If we take our time, we should be out in New Brunswick to see Darren's sister by August 24th. Neither of us is keen to drive all day long, every day. After all, it took us three days to leave Whitehorse! The continental divide is coming up and we plan to stop and go for a bike ride. If the weather is fine, we'll ride as often as we can.

Today we had lunch at the Teslin Lake campground-a lovely spot, made even better with fresh tomato sandwiches and a peanut butter lindt truffle for dessert (as well as copious amounts of peas!)

Hey cool, a blue sign coming up....Swift River! Yee haw! Wonder if they have cappuccino there? Not to worry as we are packing our stove-top espresso maker...and hmm, it sure seems like afternoon to me!?!)

It's a beautiful morning in Watson Lake, where we are currently parked at the Nice Motel, hoping to pick up their wireless and send this. We have just loaded up on phosphate-free coolant, (hard to find in Whitehorse, but first stop this morning at Northern Metallic and they had it. (yah,I know, metallic with only one "l" bugs me too)



Why the coolant? Well...at swift river lodge, I dropped DH off to start his bike ride. He was pretty pumped to cycle through the continental divide. At about 50 km, I looked for a place to pull over, park and then begin my ride. He could pick up the van and then collect me along the way. It was pretty freakish, but at exactly 48 km, there was a driveway and pull-off and some kids having a YARD SALE! I WAS PSYCHED! Picked up a cute green zippered jacket and started on my ride...with the sweetest tailwind ever.

After an hour, DH picked me up and we were parked near a poor, deserted V-dub. She probably looked pretty fine in her day! Didn't stay long, 'cause the bugs were nasty.

Anyhow, just a bit further along, a little red light came on in the van...hmmm.

And so we drove, slowly with numerous stops to let her cool down. And now we debate, visit the mechanics this morning, or just fill her with coolant and head for the hot springs.....until later.



From DH - LOVE the ride over the continental divide on my bike, HATE the little flashing red light on the temperature gauge. Looking forward to Liard hot springs (as long as we get there...).

3.0 VW adventures continued

I am sure you are all anxious to hear more adventures of Emmitt the van, so here goes. We had a glorious Monday, with very little traffic and NO RED



LIGHTS. Man were we happy. We did however bump into fellow bus owners who were not so happy!

We stopped at the top of a nice hill for Darren to start his ride into muncho lake park, and there happened to be a VW and a couple, and their dogs, and a huge puddle of coolant in the gravel...it

was kinda pouring out of the engine, and the guy was under the van.

We felt terrible for them, and I stayed long enough for them to refill the coolant, and quickly head back into munchos, a short distance, but I was worried they wouldn't even make it that far. They are gunning for Whitehorse and Skagway to visit friends and go hiking. Oh yah, and they have to pick up their new starter in the 'horse as well. They have to wallop this one with a hammer, every time they turn off the engine! But I shouldn't laugh, or make too much fun, because we are back to red lights flashing today. I guess every day is a new and exciting one with a VW!



We spent Monday night at Summit Lake or Stone Mountain Park. Awesome spot, with lots of wind, and no buggage. Saw mega-wildlife yesterday. I biked past two super cute caribou all decked out in sleek brown fur and black and white high heels, clicking on the pavement.

I also saw a lovely deer, and we drove past a mess of buffalo! Holy crap those things are massive!

Speaking of massive, just as we snuggled in for the night, a small car pulled up, towing a small cargo trailer, containing the most massive family tent we have ever seen. Around 10:30, they began erecting the beast for what appeared to be the first time. (it was larger than our cabin...no kidding!) DH says it's the kind that has room partitions inside. They



also brought with them a brand spanking new 30' by 40' white tarp and some tall poles. It was around 10:35, that the wind really started to pick up. The four children were having a great time trying to grab at the tarp, as it was flapping out of control, and dad was trying desperately to pound it into submission with some rocks. We both had a bit of a giggle, but soon fell asleep. The wind was gusting so hard during the night, that we actually had doubts about the stability of the van. I guess the family must have had a pretty nasty night with that irritating tarp directly over their heads, because they were gone by the time we woke up around 7am. They were very quiet in leaving. I thought I heard a tarp being folded around 6.



So its still morning on Tuesday and DH has caught up with me as I write in a cute pullout 50 k from stone mountain. The lights flashed first thing this morning as we started the engine and pulled out of the campground. They have continued off and on during a particularly hilly section of road, and we are glad Fort Nelson is just down the road.

From DH: Most excellent bike riding to be had so far. I am coming to terms with the Red Light – today it started flashing from a stone cold engine start – so it “can’t” actually be overheating... famous last words. I am thinking it’s either the sensors or the control unit that Interprets the sensors... will check



online in ft. nelson and/or try and find a mechanic with VW experience.

The always AWESOME Liard River hotspring stop...



4.0 Beating the Red Light into Submission

5:50 Tuesday evening and no red lights for 400 km....YEE HAW. Every time we threaten to stop at a mechanics, little Emmitt starts to behave just perfectly.

We are certainly learning a lot about his character. The online chats about VW's have been so helpful... at least, they have been great for calming us down, and giving us lots of advice. We are taking a "drive on and see" approach with our quirky red light problem. Yesterday, I was convinced our cooling fan wasn't working, as we have yet to hear from it. the only fan we have heard so far,



is one that is not supposed to exist, and it comes from somewhere in the depths of the refrigerator.

Today, we are both thinking that the sensor for the cooling system is “acting up” and that possibly the coolant we added yesterday was not mixed quite right. It had a bizarre yellow foam on top of it this morning! If anyone out there has any comments or suggestions of great VW-friendly places to stop along our route, please inform!



Fort Nelson folks were all very friendly, and sent us happily on our way, with our Anna mugs full of hot latte, and the largest block of “oyce” I have ever seen in my life. The cooler is essentially full with that and a few bottles of water!

Just past Wonowan now, with a strong tail wind willing us further along! Hoping to camp somewhere near Fort St. John. Man we are just cruisin’.



We even zipped past an Audi, going uphill, against the wind, in a thunderstorm. Emmitt-you rock!

Quite the bridge and gorge – our “camp” location last night.

From DH

Found a cute little coffee house in Dawson Creek and a “hot spot”. Sorted out some firewall problems I had connecting – probably the same as we had up the highway... Anyway – checked out some more VW sites/help and found the fridge fan coming on is “normal” but probably means we should pull it out as some point and clean behind so there is ample air flow (and the fan does not need to come on). The cooling fan – we should probably be hearing – so need to check on that. We’ve noticed the coolant tank does not backflow into the reserve as it should? But no red light for last 280 miles yesterday and this morning okay too. So thanks everyone for your Red Light well wishing... my ride yesterday was great again 35k of downhill from Summit Lake with about 15k of more honest hill climbing toward Steamboat – fantastic views along the way. That will probably be the last of the mountain riding – but looking forward to some nice prairie and Canadian Shield rides...

5.0 Wireless network delayed update from far northern Alberta and Saskatchewan

We love Lac La Biche, where the lattes are hot and strong and everything is made in Canada. The owner of the Snickerdoodle, right on the happening main street, looked surprised when I asked for doubles. “Six shots then?”, to which I replied, “sounds good!” We are still reeling from the after effects!

Small hardware stores have got to be the best little tourist attractions around. At least, they are for us. I am pumped about my new whisk broom, which I have been whining about getting since day one. And I now have a number of hangy hooks for necklaces that I am making on route. Darren picked himself up the cutest Teeny Turner Picquic screwdriver. It’s about one and a half inches long and pink. We now have our requisite piece of copper plumbing for the blue bucket as well. Everything purchased was made in Canada!



Map we attached to inside roof of Emmitt – orange dots are our camp spots.

We got on the road early this morning after a sweet, quiet, camping spot at Lawrence Lake in northern Alberta. We arrived there last night, just in time for a sunny happy hour with deck chairs, a bottle of yellow tail reserve, boursin and alpine bread. It's been a rainy, and

slightly overcast couple of days, but that sure changed in Lac La Biche! Did I mention that we love the place? Dance studios, friendly people, and a wonderful lack of box stores. Nary a one! The Snickerdoodle was hopping with all the locals meeting for coffee and baked treats. Every few minutes the door would open and someone else would pull a chair up to an already full table of friends. Lots of old-timers and families, and I was loving it!

2100 kms on board and Emmitt is eatin' up the road. No red lights for well over 1000 km, but we think we will make an appointment with VW Central and head into Saskatoon just for peace of mind.

No red lights...



On our chosen Northern route, there is a definite lack of rest stops and outhouses, and a over-abundance of large trucks and 18-wheelers. At the moment we are on the fairly quiet Hwy 55 to Cold Lake, with rolling hills and beautiful farms. We have been able to pick up CBC lots today. Its coverage from Edmonton. I keep expecting to hear some familiar voices. In Watson Lake we heard Panya talking about landslides. It made me slightly



weepy. I have been leaving behind a small trail of beads as we drive, so we are sure to find our way home.



6.0 Busted Down in Biggar, SK

Breaking News;

We broke down in Biggar, SK.

This was last night, “before” the breakdown. I was scavenging the undercarriage for a 13mm nut since the one on the bolt that holds the alternator was gone and



the bolt itself was sticking out ready to fly free too. I saw the errant bolt while doing a “little look” at the engine while Lara prepared supper on the edge of Jackfish Lake in The Battlefords Provincial Park. Nice sunset that night.



Next day... and after leaving the park I felt we were losing power, it really started yesterday but I did not want to believe it I guess..

Anyway we knew we were going to HAVE to get serviced in Saskatoon now. We started limping along towards town – taking smaller roads since our

top speed was 40 mph...then it was 30 mph... We stopped and checked it out, I was somewhat relieved when we determined it was a clutch problem not a loss of compression problem... (is this a holiday or a mechanics course taken across Canada...) Loss of compression might mean REBUILDING the engine NOOOOO....

So we pulled the plug in Biggar since driving so slow in the RAIN and in more traffic just wasn't safe. So we got a tow into town and to this great guy John's place. The official VW dealer was nice enough but too busy to deal with us.

John's going to look at it right away (well as soon as Monday). Nice to see the



Audi Quattro sitting in his shop too...

So luckily we have these great friends in Saskatoon who picked us up at John's, loaded all our STUFF and 2 bikes into their CRV and then us too and took us to their home – where I am now, getting hooked up to their internet.

It's gotta be happy hour....

7.0 Sunday afternoon in Saskatoon

Sunday afternoon in Saskatoon, playing a tune, by the light of the moon....ok, ok. Too much latte.

We are still awaiting news of Emmitt, and will talk with John on Monday morning. He is safe and sound at Import Auto, in the cleanest, roomiest looking shop.



Likewise, we are safe and sound at Dave and Joanne's, enjoying the sights of the city. We spent the morning checking out a few shops downtown, with a long lunch at an outdoor café enjoying the sun. The Fringe Festival is in town, with performances and street vendors selling yummys. We tried a plate of shrimp with magic sauce, and some excellent samosas.

The wasps were buzzing about merrily, and it wasn't until a half hour later that I felt a small pain under the leg of my Ernie and Bert's. It was very small and gentle, just a warning, so I gingerly lifted up the flannel, and out flew a wasp. The pain got a bit more intense, soon, but thankfully it was a mild bite, and I didn't panic!

We enjoyed an awesome prairie bike ride yesterday, with Team Yukon leading the way.



(Dave and DH
cruisin' the
praire)

I was looking out
for duckies and
deer.



Supper was pizza on the bbq, it's a Saskatoon specialty, followed by an evening of bead-making.

I'm afraid the addiction has started, but it's a beauty day and we are heading out soon to tour around the town with our bikes. All for now.



7.1 Eastward once more...

Still in the “toon, but departing soon!

Emmitt is now parked in front of Joanne and Dave's, home from the john's shop, where he was babied, and greased, re-clutched and rebooted, and he's just like new again.

We, on the other hand, are feeling slightly “depleted”, but are dealing with it.



we have had a wonderful visit in Saskatoon, with some great people, who graciously invited us into their home and treated us royally.

Good coffee to be had in Saskatoon...

Yesterday, we spent most of the day checking out small galleries, and shops, and ended up at the disc golf course near here, with a yukon buddy. Forest, who happens to be a “grip-pro,” also happened to be in town on business. What a coincidence! Great to see someone from home too!



Diefenbaker Park – 9 hole basket course. Worth a visit. We are about to load up on goodies and head east once again. we hit the farmer’s market this morning, and now have beets, beans, kohlrabi, cukes, spinach, corn, and lots of okanagan fruit on board. Stay tuned for more news from the road.

Downtown architecture



Cycling the elm-lined boulevards...



Lara with her new
“sausage” bottle...



8.0 praire small town route...and Emmitt hums along

(Wednesday Afternoon)

On the 44, heading east from Beausejour Manitoba, we are gunning for the Ontario border. We hope to have a short break there before continuing on to New Brunswick. We anticipate a rendezvous with our VW repair manual, that we ordered in Northern Alberta, and we look forward to some yummy fresh tomatoes from nellie's garden.

Supper can't come soon enough tonight. I can almost smell that Ukrainian sausage. I am going to cook some up to have with the homemade perogies I picked up from a little tea shop in Dauphin.

Our previous night's supper – fresh peas, rice and Ukrainian sausage – with hamer sauce and wine on the side

We had one of their cinnamon buns, and they were the real thing! Since our yukon grown veggies are long gone, it sure is fun to pick up locally grown and made products. At our favourite cheese shop in Saskatoon, we bought a couple

of nice stinky cheeses and samosas with the most incredible dipping sauce ever created. We are now packing a huge pot of “hamer sauce.” It's fruity, hot, sweet, and spicy and goes great with EVERYTHING!

I am having some with my granola tomorrow!

Last night was quintessential canadiana.



We slept on the edge of a farmer's grain field, next to an abandoned barn. We arrived in time for a glorious prairie sunset, and listened to David Francey sing "Torn Screen Door," while we sipped a glass of wine. In bed by 10, I fell asleep to coyotes howling, and woke about midnight to DH bolting upright and



announcing the arrival of the CN. As if I could have missed it! Three trains came throughout the night, and it felt so prairie! We got up around 5 am, and CBC was playing the national anthem. Just as DH finished brewing the lattes, the sun rose. Wow! As you can see we are trying to stay away from the trans-canada highway

and yellowhead, and pick some quieter routes. We can't go very fast in Emmitt, and we love checking out the smaller towns. There are no Subway's, or MacDonaldis, kids are playing in front of their homes, (some of which look straight out of the 50's) and the lady that baked your apple danish tells you to "stop in again, any time...honey" We drove through Pamela Wallin's hometown, but we didn't run into her anywhere.



One of many Ukrainian churches along the way



Also a lot of these grain elevators... heard they were disappearing – but not in this part of Saskatchewan and Manitoba...

I am a bit sad to be leaving the prairies, where the sky is always changing, and the land smells so good. I can certainly appreciate the power of the wind as it propels me along on my bike. We did not see any major weather so far on the trip, and fortunately missed out on the record hailstorm that hit Dauphin last Thursday.



As we drove by the Ford dealership this morning, I noticed some of the vehicles had dents in their hoods. From where we parked, you could count numerous cars and trucks with their windows completely blown out. We picked up a newspaper for a full account of the tennis-ball-sized hailstones, and trees that smashed into houses.



A tomato from the Saskatoon Farmers Market that we left with and on the way out a fellow said “hey, I recognize that tomato” Apparently he’d grown it and was just heading back into the market. The bagels are from the Cheese Shop on Broadway – from Montreal (frozen). Pretty good toasted.

Almost 8 pm now, and we have had a full day. 700 k on board, a lovely ride on a flat road with virtually no traffic and a crazy tail wind, a swim in Lake Manitoba and an afternoon latte waiting for our suits to dry.



Flat with the wind to your back...

We are now looking for a sweet spot on the Canadian Shield in Whiteshell Provincial Park.



9.0 a day spent with Superior

Just past 7 am and its fresh air on CBC. Fresh air on the shores of the big lake too, as they announce 1 degree in Thunder Bay. I am pulling a Tasha Weninger still wearing my jammies under my jeans. We woke around 6, to the sound of waves lapping the shore in possibly our sweetest spot yet. About 40 km north of the Sault, off the highway on a small ATV trail which led to a “secret” beach. (actually, a lucky spot to find in the heart of cottage country) We tuned in to a gorgeous sunset during happy hour, and cuddled up later to watch the crescent moon going down over Superior.



Front row seats in the best little moving theatre and espresso-mobile around. We had a wondrous day yesterday driving through Superior Park. DH rode his bike while I cruised the windy beaches collecting pebbles and inspiration.

On the food front, the gathering continues in abundance. We snagged a bagged summer sausage in Wawa, always a road trip favourite at Young’s General Store. If you ignore all the kitsch, you can see remnants from the past, like the old hardwood floor, shiny with thousands of footsteps and the oak pickle barrel, where you just stick your hand in a grab one! We started our morning with fresh wild blueberries from the Pays First



Nation Gas N'Go, that we promptly ate with vanilla yoghurt. We spent about an hour in Terrace Bay, just enough time to send an update, and hit the bakery. Warm Kaiser buns and hot chocolate chip cookies, fresh out of the oven. (i had to try a package of the oatmeal ones as well....) and the best score of all...thee most yummy smoked trout from the The Camper's Store.



This tuck shop was in a crazily touristy little area near Pancake Bay, where we probably would never have stopped, except that we needed a bottle of red wine! I hope they are open in September!

Emmitt says hello to all, and is still a bit sad that he missed getting to meet his twin yesterday. Just as I stopped to take a walk and get a photo of DH cycling by, an identical V-dub was heading west. Darren actually thought it was me for a second! It would have been very fun to meet and talk about our adventures.

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actually thought it was me for a second! It would have been very fun to meet and talk about our adventures.



11.0 Our Nations Capital

On the trans-canada once again, and heading into the nation's capital.



(Parliament hill – our detour around a traffic jam...?)

We are loaded with produce and farm goodies, from my parents...pickled beets, bread and butter pickles and dills, fresh corn, beets and potatoes, and best of all, a large box of Russell Stover's mint chocolates. Within minutes of arriving at the farm, we had a pot of

water on to boil for corn, and we were checking out the giant pumpkin. The thing is massive!

From our sweet night on Superior, we essentially just gunned it for Pembroke, with no alternate routes on small roads, as Highway 17 is the only option. We did not cycle, having seen many signs permitting it. Blind River, home of our buddy Jonathon, was having its farmer's market. More blueberries, a lovely raspberry pie, and some very woolly socks! I am thinking ahead with those.



(wasting no time on the blueberry front)

We definitely did not pack for cooler weather, and have been hearing about the incredible heat wave in Whitehorse. Can't believe we are missing it!

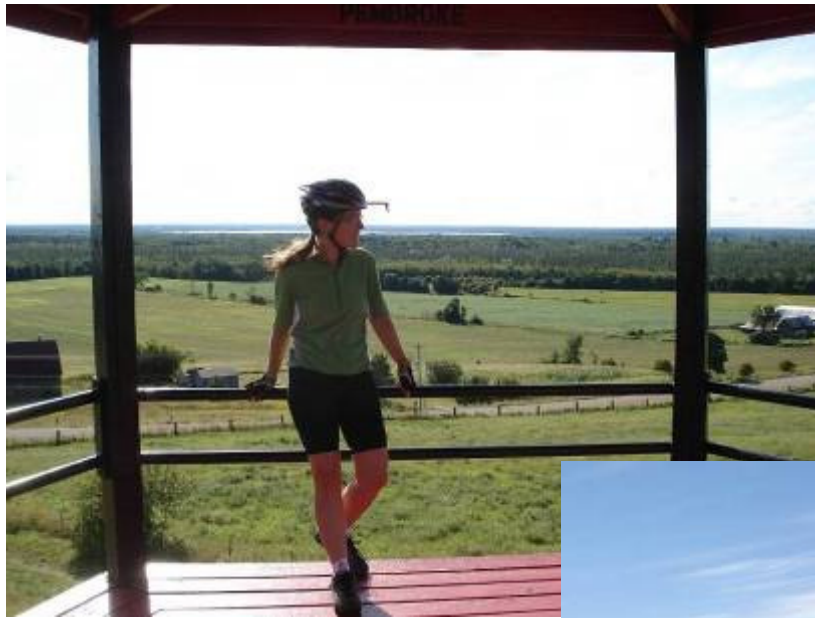


After having seen five signs for yard sales, we needed a break, and hauled over in Massey. I didn't snag anything, but DH picked up 4 shiny new(ish) hubcaps for Emmitt. One of ours is missing and two are cracked, so he was happy! These ones are small, vintage and chromed and just so much cuter!

At present, we don't know how many are left on the van, as we

proceeded to lose one about 1 km east of the yard sale.

We did return on foot, and found it!



We only had a short visit with my parents but will stop again for longer on the way back from the east coast!

We did manage to squeeze in some cycling, fishing, and nursing farm animals back to health.

Lookout Hill near Westmeath – just around the corner from Lara's folks' place.





One of Ontario's wonderful small-mouth bass.

Tiny little perch during a tiddler-snatching derby...



The night we arrived, little Blackie was not looking too alert. He is one of two kittens my mom picked up at the neighbours. She said she was happy and jumping all over

her, when she was cleaning out the turkey hut, but she was lying limp, and breathing irregularly when we saw her. She did not want to eat, or be held, so I put her on a tarp in the garage, sure she would be gone by morning. I did manage to squirt a tiny bit of water and antibiotic into her before bed. She was not around in the morning and I was convinced she crawled somewhere to die. I found her hours later under the clematis. Her little buddy was very cute and cuddled with her for the whole day. By evening I

decided she really needed some fluid and heated up milk and honey. With a eye-dropper she seemed to actually lick up a bit of it, only a tiny bit, but she made it through another night. Just before we left, she seemed perkier and managed to walk outside to sit in the sun. I sure hope she pulls through! We'll keep you posted on the well-being of Blackie, and the future adventures of Emmitt the van. We are wondering if this is his first encounter with a traffic jam! It certainly is the first one we have had on the trip so far. Stop and go, and all we want to do is GO, and have happy hour with our friends Karen and Richard...I wonder if there might be some longanizas and aji with that happy hour?



12.0 La Belle Province

We love Ottawa/Hull cycle paths, and spent the morning cruising through Gatineau Park. the coolest thing is the combination of wooded trails with enough urban tossed in to make things interesting.



We just had to check out Parliament and see what was going on. Steve was a bit too busy to come out riding with us. We heard he was roughing it out in the bush south of the city, some hotel called Montebello? Wonder if it had electric lights?



much to resist. We shared a butter chicken, and got bagels to go (plus one, toasted, with cream cheese, just for pleasure!)

Because we were holding out for a Montreal-style bagel from the Byward Market, we were both starved by the time we got there, and the smells coming from Shafali Bazaar curry house were too

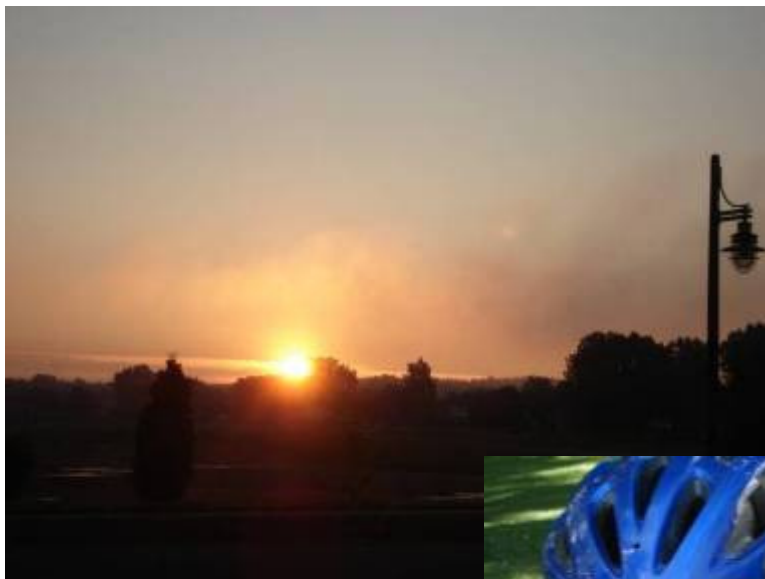


Although we are happy to be almost in Moncton, Quebec had everything we love in a road trip. Markets with plenty of local fruits and veggies, tiny cafés with cappuccinos, hot and strong, fromageries with the squeakiest cheese curds ever....they are, of course, fresh that day!

(Sunset on the St.Lawrence)
Not to mention sunsets and rises over the mighty St. Lawrence, where we camped on a historic ferry crossing dock. It was great to see so many locals coming down with their picnic supper, or happy hour, or fishing rods.



(Sunrise on the St. Lawrence)



Good job we are still cycling lots, because we are certainly eating well, and haven't even hit our favourite lobster hut on the coast!





(Emmitt's twin, but without the pin stripes, propane, and possibly air-cooled!)

We are loving the comforts of Emmitt, and been lucky to find excellent quiet overnight spots. We ended up just east of the New Brunswick border last night, (August 22) at a picnic/swimming hole on a lovely lake, near a small

village. There was a little red boardwalk and red picnic tables everywhere, including one out on a raft in the middle of the lake. Although it was evening and coolish, we had a refreshing dip. It was after about an hour, that we heard a very loud vehicle approaching??? and realised we were about 70 metres from a train track. Holy crow! That is some noise, and particularly squealy as it



rounds the bend by the lake. It only came by about 4 times, and we slept great! We have been following the tracks for a while now, and I am almost getting a bit sentimental about them.



(moi avec mousseline des crevettes)

It's the world of rockers we have entered into this morning as we pass through Edmunston New Brunswick. I, for one, plan on doing quite a bit of rocking in the next few days. Outside of a shop downtown, was every conceivable type of patio rocker! Now, in Grand Falls,

looking for a boulangerie, and high speed!

PS. Blackie seems to be picking up, and is now hobbling around after Nellie when she is in the garden!



13.0 Resting in NB

Emmit is blissfully resting in my sister's back yard in Dieppe, New Brunswick.

We arrived here late last Thursday night – actually driving in the dark and on a major divided highway for the first time on this trip.



We've been hanging out. Taking some time to get in some "group" rides (Lara and me) and visit with family. The riding here is spectacular – lots of nice topography, scenic views and quaint little towns with friendly folks. Yesterday we went out in my brother-in-law's family's boat.

Going swimming, having a few beers and fishing for quahogs (see below).

Time from clam-bed to bbq: 20-minutes.



14.0 up and down the gaspe

After almost 10 days without an update, I am feeling like one is necessary; although I am have troubles concentrating on the screen, for fear of missing something super cute on this beauty coastline of the Gaspé!



DH commented that I must have used some form of “cute” a billion times yesterday. As in, “oh my cuteness, check that out,” or “it doesn’t get any cuter!”

Its Labour Day Monday, and we are on the north shore of Gaspé, heading west. Early start, as we got up around 5:30 am,

after a beauty night with the waves crashing on the shore. I could get used to



sleeping near the ocean! We have been very lucky with our camping spots and consumption of seafood. After leaving Moncton (and the sweet lawn at Nicola and Propane’s house) we managed to check out a painter’s festival in Shediac, the best fried clams in the province at Chez Leo, and more yummy lobster rolls in St. Thomas.

Our last night in New Brunswick, we enjoyed fresh scallops and a bottle of Twin Fin, on a secluded beach, with a fantastic sunset, near Belledune. I liked the name

on the map and wanted to stay somewhere near there, so we spotted a small dirt road and checked it out. No signs indicated a park, but there were picnic tables, a swinging bench seat by the ocean, and an outhouse. The coolest thing though, was the checker board set up on a concrete table with beach stones for playing pieces.

Around 7 pm, two guys came down to fish, and that's it. It sure seems like the season for tourists is done around here. I was still expecting it be somewhat busy, until mid-September.

The Halte-Municipales (rest-stops) are so incredible. It's like

there is a competition amongst the communities to have the best halte. We passed by one with picnic spots, tiered into the hillside, and you could drive right up to them. The view was awesome! Another had picnic tables cantilevered out over the ocean. Fun, but scary looking to me!



to



With over 1100 cycling kms (DH), and around 750 (Lara) on board so far during the trip, at least we are getting some exercise to balance the food consumption, not to mention beer and alcohol! All our late nights, and indulgence have caught up with us. Although we had

lots of fun in Moncton, we were both very tired and craving a nine o'clock bedtime. I even heard Darren say... "I think I am done with beer for a while." This was quickly followed by "at least until it gets really hot again."



There is something about an icy cold brew, on a hot summer day, and it's made even sweeter drifting out in the ocean. Propane's family owns a fishing boat that's been converted to a summer party boat. They graciously took us out for an

afternoon of fun in the sun. When you get too hot, you jump overboard. When you get too thirsty, you drink more beer. And if that's not fun enough for you....you go quahog fishing!



So picture this, you get a pair of wool socks, pull 'em up good and high. Then you take the electric tape and wrap it around your calves, so your socks don't fall off when you jump in and swim towards shore. So when you can stand up to your waist, you start fishin'. That means bouncing up and down, pushing your heels into the muck into you feel something sharpish, but not too sharp. The sharpish things are QUAHOGS, or bar clams, or pallourdes. The sharp

things are oysters. We are after the quahog! You reach down and pull the thing out of the muck. It needs to be at least 1 and half inches across. It goes into the bag and onto the BBQ about 30 minutes later. A half hour of quahog fishing was pretty strenuous exercise, and my heels and calves were a bit sore. Boy did I need another Corona! We commented that this would be a wonderful maritime exercise class for tourists. All you needed to add was a bit of house music and an instructor barking out commands. “Push those heels down! Now bend and grab! That’s it now! Four more!”

We are happy to be eating lots of seafood, but haven’t had much fish yet, maybe today we’ll find some. Last night was our first crevettes feed! We had seen so many signs advertising fresh shrimp for sale in the morning. We were anxious for them by dinnertime. Of course, there was no poissoniere around, but I spotted the SHRIMP PROCESSING PLANT. Right on the ocean, and CLOSED! I could have cried. In front of the plant was a casse-croute, where we could have had them prepared for us...which means deep-

fried. I decided to go in and talk to the lady. I wish my French were better, but eventually she understood that I wanted to cook them myself and sold me a pound of the tiny delectables, fresh from the dock that day!

Avec sel, poivre moule, c’est parfait, or as I kept saying in the shop “perfecto!” I am definitely having some troubles combining Spanish with French!

Only 9 am and I am already craving second breakfast. Boulangeries have been few and far between, and I keep hoping to see one around the



next bend on this winding and windy ocean road.

14.1 Kingston once more

We have been a bit delayed in getting out our updates. The one I just sent re: the Gaspé only came out from Kingston on “dial-up” no less. We had little luck with WiFi in Quebec which I am suspecting is my more my wireless card for my notebook than lack of wireless networks. Anyway at one point I just gave up trying and figured we could send from Lara’s sisters here in Kingston.

Emmit has been performing well with the exception of a small coolant leak of the typical “wasserbox” engine kind... a small coolant drip in the morning before the engine heats up, expands and seals the heads. It’s something we have to watch – if it gets worse it requires a pretty big job to fix.

We ventured onto a major highway for the first time yesterday to get through Montreal

15.0 On the Farm

We’ve been hunkered down in Ontario for awhile, first in Kingston and now in Pembroke. It’s a beautiful day out there today with forecast highs for later this week of 28C – WOW. We delivered Emmitt to Almonte and the seemingly very capable hands of Frank Condelli who specializes in VW vanagons (another WOW).

We decided to get a bit of work down while we were so close to a qualified mechanic and we were at the farm anyway. We were going to wait till Saskatoon – but figured this option made more sense. Frank is going to pull the heads and change the head gaskets – one of which has a small leak that will only



get worse at the weather gets cooler. Once the heads are off, its possible they will have to be replaced... and once the engine is all apart might as well do the water pump too...

Lara doing a bit of WWing with Frank at his place in Almonte. There were about 5 vanagons parked off to the left – it felt a bit like dropping your kid off for the first day of school... Frank and another guy who showed up with is Vanagon were marveling at our “clean” engine... Ontario is the land of road-salt and apparently there are not many vans of our era in as good a shape or low kms. So I suppose that the good news since it seems that Frank has seen A LOT of vanagons in his time (he hosts BusFusion in Almonte every June – a weekend Vanagon get together...)

-DH

September 12 and back on the farm in Pembroke.



We arrived here a couple days ago thinking we were in pretty good shape from all the biking. I am aching this morning after hauling, splitting, sorting and stacking a large supply of firewood for Nellie and Andy. We are not used to the hardwoods I guess. They are heavy!!!

Fall is approaching around here, and the first of the leaves are changing. It

finally rained yesterday after a long dry spell, and we got soaked doing the wood. Nellie had a fire going in their new wood stove so we did enjoy the fruits of our labour. Not to mention other fruits such as TOMATOES. I am just beginning to feel like I could be getting my fill of them! We will help Nellie freeze corn and tomatoes, plant garlic, and monitor “the Pumpkin.” This thing is incredible. Pushing 300 lbs and



gaining 10 each day, the hulking mass can now be seen from the highway, an oat field away!

We are having fun with the kitties too. Little Blackie is doing pretty good, but still a bit limpy and tired and just not as fun as Grey Mouse, who climbs up your arm, sits on the wheelbarrow of wood as you unload it, and licks the foam off the top of your latte.



We certainly didn't have much extreme hot weather on our trip, although it did hit 30 plus in Kingston where we visited my sister. From the Gaspé, we spent our last night at the sweetest of sweet places on the shore of the St. Lawrence. On the drive up, we had stopped to check out a café, and "test" their croissants. The back of the property had a small sign

saying it was a rest stop. It was a gorgeous grassy field, with a little sign saying that camping was permitted, with a two night maximum stay. There was a bathroom, a little box for donations, and an espresso machine within sight! What more could you ask for? We pulled way out close to shore, and had our happy hour watching the lights of the big ships going by!



The next day, we followed the river towards Kingston. You know when you just have one of those days....well it was bound to happen!

Our first stop in Ontario, near Cornwall, was the information kiosk, where we picked up maps of the awesome cycling trails along the St. Lawrence. We had lunch and planned to start from there. DH going first, and me driving ahead to meet him west of Cornwall. It started when I began to stress myself out about driving through the big centre of the "city." I drive country roads and towns, not city! At the best of times I can only manage to navigate with a map in front of me, and Darren's keen sense of direction. So leaving the parking lot, I manage to take a wrong turn within 2 km, and ended up in a small town, staring at the map. I knew where I had gone



wrong and narrowly avoided merging onto the 401. I was about to start out again, when I see Darren cycling towards me. well, he shouldn't be here either, so ha!

He asks, "so you know what's going on?"

And I admit I took a wrong turn. He repeats the question and looks up at the top of the van....**I HAVE BEEN DRIVING WITH THE POP-UP OPEN!** I almost drove on the 4-0-stinky-1 with the stupid top up! He said he had been chasing me down, waving his arms, and hoping I would take the wrong turn!

Ok, so good enough, back on the road

and I am approaching the dreaded Cornwall. Flashing lights and 2 police cars, and I get pulled over for a 'routine' check. Thank god it happened now, with everything in order! I am innocent, I have done nothing wrong. The polite officer jokes about my yukon licence and how far from home I am. I am sure he wonders why I am wearing padded spandex shorts when its pushing 28 degrees! So I root around under my bead table, in the glove box and pull out the paper work he asks for. Turns out our insurance has run out!!! I am flabbergasted! You have got to be kidding. I root some more to try and find a new one...no such luck! He believes me that this is a crazy oversight, and lets me off, with the promise that I will sort this out pronto! Ok, I am on my way again, and heading through the downtown core. You know, this is not so bad at all. I am stupid for being so nervous, but actually begin to doubt that I am even in the downtown core. I pass by cute cafes and boutiques, and then start to see some bigger groceries and box stores, and then my nemesis. Trying to focus on the non-existent signs for highway 2, and avoid the signs for the bridge to USA, I find myself in a round-about. At last, a huge green sign and arrow pointing out HWY 2, Downtown. You see, I wasn't actually downtown in the first place. Man i'm good, so I calmly maneuver the busy circle, and I am pumped. A snazzy cream Cadillac pulls up next to me, and the guy asks ME where highway 2 is. "we're on it, its Kingston that way," I point. He gives me the thumbs up! So proud of

myself. I drive by this big bridge to the US, (thought I had already seen all the signs way before, but maybe there are two bridges?) and then I hit a downtown section of shops. I am sitting pretty, i'll be through all this soon. But why is the river now on my right? Must be a canal or something. And hey, that guy on the bike heading towards me, sure looks like DH! I slow down as he raises his arms above his head, and IT IS DH. I wonder why he is going in the wrong direction. He never gets lost!

I CAN NOT BELIEVE THAT I TURNED MYSELF COMPLETELY AROUND, AND WENT UNDER THE MASSIVE USA BRIDGE AND DOWNTOWN CORNWALL TWICE without noticing a thing, until DH! I had to assume official loser status for the day! He wondered how long I would have continued heading east. Oh probably until I got pulled over at the police check again!



Cutting wood at the Quebec farm...



Sunset at the Upper Camp just after a rain storm.












Lookout road near the Pembroke farm with the Laurentian mountains in the distance.

16.0 Heat and Hills

Currently latteed-up and heading home at last, just south of Sudbury, on the busy trans-canada, we are sucking up the last of a seemingly endless summer.

Pembroke

Currently	5 Day Forecast from  Environment Canada		
Observed at: CFB Petawawa 10:00 AM EDT Wednesday 19 September 2007	Wednesday	Wednesday night	Thursday
	 High 27°C	 Low 13°C	 High 23°C
Sunny	A few clouds	Sunny with cloudy periods	
	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
	 High 26°C Low 7°C	 High 22°C Low 11°C	 High 21°C Low 7°C
Sunny	Sunny	Cloudy	Sunny
Temperature 16°C			
Pressure/ Tendency 102.1 kPa↑			

We were happy to get the van back from Frank, with everything done on time, plus more! I guess he had a few problems with some rotten steel bolts, and spent a very long time drilling them out of the heads. They are now replaced with stainless steel ones, coated with anti-seize and kissed by Frank. He tuned up our “stick-y” shift, pressure-washed the engine, and “krown-

oiled” it. (we were told to do this every month) i am planning to fry some eggs on the engine block for breakfast! He noticed a missing lever on the heater and replaced it. There are many parts that are impossible to order any more, so he collects crappy rusty ones from old vans, sandblasts them, and coats them with Pore-18. This makes them shiny and black and impervious to rust for eternity! In addition, he installed relay lights, and high-end “unavailable” german-made bulbs, so we can see our way home better! Oh yah, and he sold us a new-ish set of tires, which we are presently hauling around. Even at an unheard of shop-rate of \$65 per hour, we were still left with yet another 4 digit repair bill. We met a guy at Frank’s with his van, that his wife has coined “the gold brick” partly for its colour, and mostly for its O&M. Funny enough, we just bumped into him at the French River Rest stop on his way out to Vancouver. It’s a small country!



We left the farm on Friday, September 21 loaded with a crate of tomatoes, fresh potatoes, carrots, zucchini and way too many turnips. We did not manage to squeeze in the obscenely large pumpkin, (its pushing 350 lbs) and were forbidden from taking grey mouse and blackie along for the ride! Speaking of rides, Darren has been trying to participate in a cycling event hosted by a club across Canada. The only one that seemed like it might work was organized by Broken Spokes, out of Bancroft, Ontario.



THE HASTINGS HIGHLANDS HILLY HUNDRED

About The Tour

Terrain: a wonderful mix of gentle country roads, limited highway riding, “*brehtaking*” hills and scenery carved through ancient granite bedrock. Riders will travel through some of Ontario’s most beautiful landscapes where you will be awed by magnificent lakes, hills and colorful hardwood forests along the route. Whatever challenging route you have selected the area is steeped in history.



This was not a race, just a ride with a number of different routes and distances, 60, 80, 160, and 240 km. i chose the 80k and Darren the 240! I mean how hilly could they mean. It's not like we have never ridden a bike before. Not like we haven't tackled hills, like in almost every province! Secretly, i was a little nervous, but since there was support, and

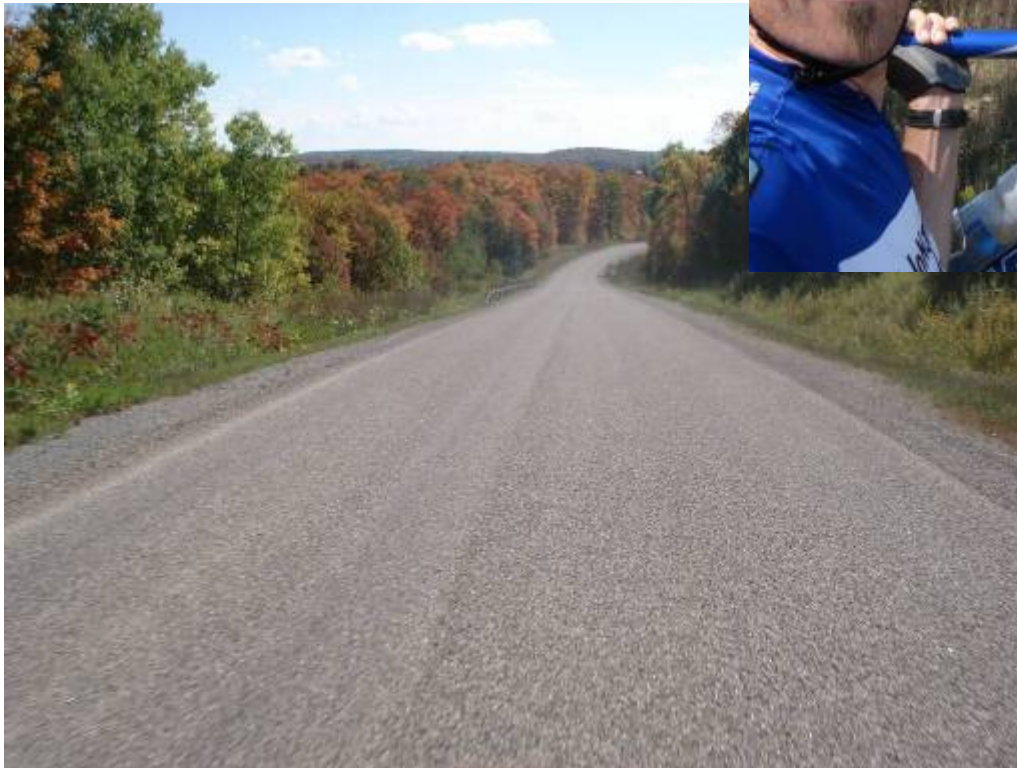
checkpoints, i figured why not. I am up for the challenge, and dh has already done the whole kluane-chilkat relay, so he's definitely ready! We tuned up the bikes, cleaned, greased, and shiny and spent the night in Bancroft, ready for the 7:30 am start in Millenium Park. (like, are they crazy. Who needs to start riding at that ungodly hour!) it was 22 degrees at 6:30 am and slightly overcast, and we met up for the pre-ride meeting. There were over 150 riders, and only 16 were women! The mighty 240's consisted of 18 hearty souls, 2 women, 4 single riders, and a club from Toronto called The Lap Dogs. Needless to say, there was only one Yukoner. I had a wonderful ride, mostly by myself, through incredible fall colours on small country roads. Some hills were brutal and we had nasty head winds on the return. I used my granny gear for one of the first times. In fact, i used it more than once. I was breathing so hard at one point that my chest ached. Then there was a lovely flat section, and i could snack on some gorp, and absorb summer. I finished in a little more than 3 hours and had a swim at the park, drank lots of cool water and explored the cute town of Bancroft. I returned around 3 pm to wait for Darren.

(from DH). So we headed out as a group of 18 riders in the 240km category – 11 of which were the black lycra clad LAPDOGS. It was classic group riding from the start and when the



LAPDOGS lead us through a red light, one of them commented “that won’t be the first motorist we’ll piss off today” – I kind of had those TO boys figured out. We formed two lines of 8 and rotated the lead, the pace was pretty high but the terrain wasn’t too bad so it all seemed pretty good. When you are group-riding like this you don’t notice the scenery as much, or the time, and before we knew it we were at the first checkpoint. Most of the roads were secondary at best – not too badly paved but definitely not “smoothed” out like the highways, lots of blind hills, ups and downs and corners. Going down one of the big hills into the hamlet of Combermere, I hit 80kms/hr and a half km later heard a loud pop as my rear tire blew out. I stopped to inspect the damage and was amazed to see the tire’s sidewall had a hole in it – not just the tube punctured but the tire was shot. I didn’t have a spare, nor did the many cyclists that proceed to ride by me as the rain started to fall. Hmmm... 60kms into this ride and I am thinking it could be over? After a few minutes of hanging out asking each passing cyclist for a spare tire I came up with an idea. I used a tube patch and stuck it to the inside of the tire, then I added a second just to be sure. I had the tire half inflated when another guy threw me a used energy gel pack and said to use it between the tire and tube as a sort of patch. I did this and also proceeded to get all kinds of that sticky gel stuff over me, the tube and the tire. Mostly inflated, I managed to ride to the second checkpoint about 10 kms away. The ham-radio operator called the mechanic’s van and a new tire was headed my way – what service! The van took a while, but eventually I was on my way again, losing about an hour in the whole ordeal. The “hundred” part refers to the imperial 100 miles that many American clubs call “century rides”. So for this day the 160km route had an extra loop for the 240 group. So after losing an hour I arrived at the junction and contemplated turning left and only doing the 160. Turning right though meant going to Foymount, Ontario’s highest point and also hitting Quadeville – a definite bonus for any

cyclist. I opted to turn left. The hills were very tough in this extra loop and I caught up to two other cyclists, one of whom was walking up a hill munching on a power bar “trying to recover”. It started getting quite hot as the morning clouds dissipated. I probably went through 15 bottles of water plus a bunch I just dumped on my head as well as a stop at a lake where I drenched myself – just a hair from jumping right in! Throughout the entire ride it was one hill after another, mostly short but always steep. I ended up in my smallest “granny-gear” more times than I can count – it’s a gear I have only used a couple of times before. By 4:30pm and 200 kms on board I was really starting to dislike all the hills, but I knew by that time that there wasn’t going to be any 40km down-hill to Bancroft. Sure enough there were climbs to the last 5km. I managed to keep it together and never cursed these hills I usually cherish, I just dropped it down to the granny gear and “chipped” away at them. I cruised into Bancroft just before 6pm just over 10 hours since I had left and just under 9 hours on the bike!



Meanwhile back at the checkpoint, I (lara) whiled away my time hanging out with the locals. Gord Jenkins told me about the ghost towns in the area, and the exploits of Al Capone, who moved here in the 30's to get away from his "busy" life in Niagara Falls. Gord was the ham-radio operator who volunteered to help out with communications for the ride. He offered us camping accommodations at his place. He knows what its like to be "trailerling!" I met another rider who was a writer in residence in Dawson, last year, and someone else asked if i knew Daniel Janke. Everyone wanted to know if we had driven all this way for the Hilly Hundred!!

Not exactly, but it was worth staying a few extra days for....

It was getting hotter and windier, and i was desperate for an ice cream cone. I decided to wait and have one when Darren arrived. Alas, it was too late by then, and we headed over for a glorious bath at Gord's house, followed by a late night walk around Bancroft, just for a bit of exercise.

Days later, and we are about to send this off from Terrace Bay. We arrived here last night, and i was convinced we could find a sweet spot to camp. I had stayed in Terrace about 20 years ago as a young tree-planter and remembered a beach. There was some debate between the two of us as to whether or not Terrace Bay would have a "beach." I am known to be wrong most of the time when it comes to directions or locations, but i kept insisting i remembered a beach!!! The light was fading, we had driven 700 long kilometers, we were tired and hungry, and the prospect of looking for a most likely non-existent beach.....????? Well, i wasn't counting on much!

But oh my god, there is a sign that says Beach! It was a few weird turns and missed turns later, past the hospital, down through some neighbourhood, and finally on a windy road to a golf course, that i think dh began to trust in the beach. WE GOT TO THE SWEETEST SPOT OF ALL THE TRIP HERE IN BEAUTY TERRACE BAY. If you weren't happy enough just to be on the rocky shoreline of Lake Superior, you had your choice of awesome sandy beach on one side, and the Aguasabon River on the other. The river was pretty enough with bald eagles, geese and ducks, but the INCREDIBLE WATERFALLS, really took your breath away, and i had my choice of two, wondrous, clean toities!!! We parked on a grassy knoll, and spent the night listening to the thunder of the water.

Darren got up early with fishing on his mind, and i hoped he would catch us a nice salmon. Unfortunately, his worms, that had be resting on the roof of

the van, decided to make a break for it in the middle of the night, and the container was empty! He tried using a piece of summer sausage from Wawa, but no such luck!

17.0 The Field Behind the Plough



After 3 long days and nights in mighty Ontario, we are happily whiling away the hours on the prairies. Our thoughts of fishing and swimming in lovely lakes and rivers of Canadian Shield are now replaced by train chasing, and watching massive machinery at work, harvesting for the nation. Still no sign of “the dirty dozen,” and we have given up hope of finding

them. At least the weather is cool, and we can’t smell them decaying under the overhead luggage carrier. That is where we suspect our little friends are hiding out. I secretly hope they made a well-planned wormy escape back to the land. Lots of geese on the move south, which makes me want to hurry home myself. At Steinbach Manitoba, we saw the “gold brick” van and the trans-canada for probably the last time. We were very happy to leave the big highway behind, and



cruise the tiny, quiet back roads of rural Manitoba, where people know how to grow real big pumpkins!!! The folks are friendly here, and almost every little town has the cutest camping area right near the ball diamond, or across from the co-op, or by a little pond. They are mostly around 5 or 10 dollars, in camping season. We are definitely off-season! Last night we slept behind a large round bale of straw in a field near Rayville. Another beautiful moon and gorgeous sunrise later and we

point the van towards Saskatoon. The cooler is getting low, and we'll restock....ooh the hamster sauce! I can almost taste it now. We still have a half bucket of tomatoes left from the farm, and i must say, i am finally getting my fill. The last of the wild blueberries we bought near Sudbury, are all but gone, but the boys at Napody Meats in Melville, sold us the sweetest bag of homemade perogies with a a nice chunk of kielbasa to wash them down. The raspberry danish afterwards from Nellie's Bakery, was WAY MORE than i needed. My memories of crossing Canada will be forever linked to food. We are so glad we brought our bikes!!! Yesterday's ride through the Qu'appelle Valley was stunning. You could not recognize it as Saskatchewan, with gentle rolling hills, through an incised river valley. We dropped down into this crack in the prairie with small knobby hills on one side a large lake on the other, and 40 kms of twisty road through the middle.



Small farmhouses around here are rare, but you do see the occasional abandoned building filled with memories. Yesterday we passed by Sinclair Manitoba, where an artist has restored one of these old homes to a 1968 vintage, and revealed one side of the house. Behind plexiglass, you can peer into the various rooms, and see how simple life used be for a

prairie family. Simple, but most likely harsh, with not much sheltering them from the weather.

Near Manitou Beach, and we are looking for a disc golf course. Darren located some on the internet before we left, and we played an interesting course in Otterburne Manitoba on the grounds of the Providence College and Seminary. Even though i had some pretty lousy throws, I was careful not to use any profanities!





The course we just checked out this morning was an entirely different entity. 18 holes laid out on prairie grasslands, complete with baskets, discs, mowed fairways and a club-house. Murray, the manager, was not around, so we paid our dues, and played a fun and windy game! Wish i had left my wooly socks in the van! The pickies will be a constant reminder of this cute little course. We are now 60 km from Saskatoon, and it looks like Emmitt will make his way into the big city on his own steam this time! He is ticking along, with only one red light on! Every 30 000 miles, the oxygen sensor needs to be changed or inspected.

Fortunately, there is a little button you can locate to turn the light off, and take your worries away! For now we have the light covered by a sticker. All the best from the land of grain.



18.0 Traveling Through the Leaves

A windy Monday afternoon in peace country, and we are most definitely in Alberta. Its big truck central, and we're the slow, irritating tourists that everybody has to pass. I think we have probably seen the last of the quiet back roads as we approach mile zero! Dawson Creek's downtown free wi-fi is only an hour away. So is the sweet little café and a latte with my name on it!



We left Saskatoon on Sunday morning after another fun visit with the Weningers. We are packing 2 litres of hamster sauce, and hopefully some will make it back home! It sure smells great in the van. We got the heady aroma of summer sausage, mixed with the sweet scent of almost 2000 kms of cycling, topped off with “eau de Ontario turnip.”

Aaahh, what a combo! Thankfully, the rug smells better after a good wash at my parent's place. We had a latte disaster the day before we got to the farm, when a full, hot pot toppled over and splashed everywhere! I parked at a bit of an angle for afternoon coffee. I was delirious from lack of caffeine, i guess. That's my excuse for yesterday's stupidity as well. We stopped just north of Vermillion AB to take advantage of the wide shoulders and amazing tailwind. Darren always bikes first in case i blow a tire. He would just pick me up. Likewise, if i broke down, he would pass me. Living on the edge, and wanting all the tailwind to myself, i got on my gear and prepared to leave first. I thought it might be a bad idea, but really, what could go wrong? When we stopped, i really had to go pee, so i ran off into the bush. By the time i got back, he had everything on my bike and i was ready to go....before i did my usual checklist.... He beeped as he drove by, and as i watched him crest the first hill, i reached back to NOT feel the extra set of keys in my back pocket! This is a routine check for me. I start to pedal, i reach back and check, and they are always there! Not this time though. They are safely tucked away in the glove box, where i always put them, so I'll know where they are. I start

to laugh. There's not much else to do. We are in the middle of nowhere, with few houses, no gas stations, but I have the phone number for the cell phone, and Darren has the phone. I have no money of course. It's all locked in the van, which was going to be parked 30 km down the road, while Darren left to cycle 50 km further.

I went through umpteen scenarios about what i could do about my predicament.

The best thing was to enjoy this sweet ride (i was averaging 35k per hour) and send telepathic thoughts to Darren....check the glove box, check the glove box!!

I came upon Emmitt parked on a side road in the sun.

Front doors, and sliding doors all locked. I quickly

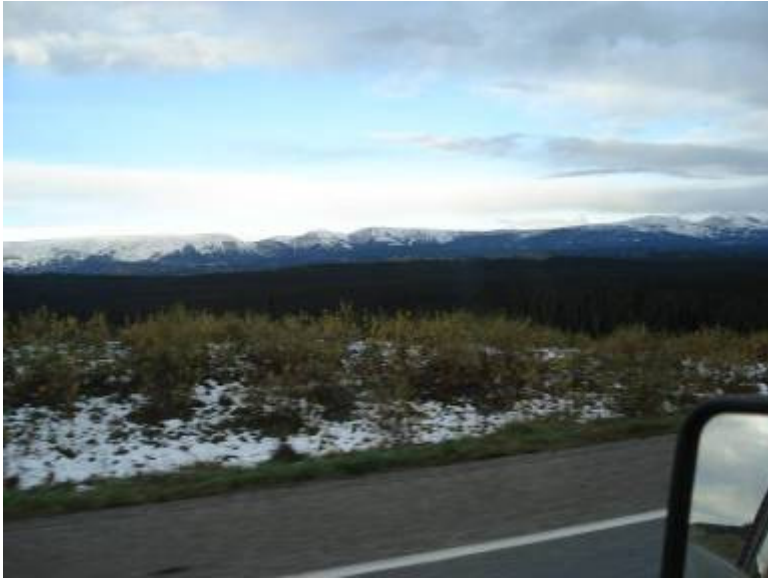
peeked inside to see the vanagon manual on the floor by my seat, and my heart soared!! He might have checked the glove box. I raced to the back door, and shrieked with delight when my finger pushed the door release open....!!!!!! In 2 seconds, i was in the back, smacking my head on the inside shelf. Luckily, i still had my helmet on, so no damage! Maybe it even knocked some sense into me. When we met up again, we had a good laugh about it. I just love how smart he is!

We are now parked in front of Hug a Mug, and i am heading in for caffeine bliss.



19.0 We are in the Wilderness...

Daybreak on the Alaska highway, and we have just seen the first fresh snow in the hills. Its really the end of summer then, and we are making our way home.



After covering 800 clicks yesterday, our biggest day yet, we stopped just outside of Wonowon. Dh spotted a radio tower and small road leading up to it. It was early, around 6:30, and so nice to be parked up on a hill, getting some awesome sun. It would also mean a lovely sunrise. We love northwestel! After happy hour, i made fried polenta with

melted asiago cheese and salsa and a green salad. We had to start up the van, open all the windows and vent the place out afterwards. Man that cheese is stinky! Tastes great though!

We picked up a cribbage board in Manitoba, and have been enjoying a couple of games before bed. Around 7:45, we heard a dull thump outside. I looked out to see if a truck had pulled up and commented that it was getting pretty dark. We ignored the thump, and the second one a short while later. CBC was blaring and we were engrossed in our second game, which i was winning. Almost 9 pm, and bedtime is fast approaching, I was finishing the last two sips of wine, when the third thump sounded right beside the sliding door. I stuck my nose up near the screen, and someone else's nose and shiny black eyes were looking right in at me. That's right, a bear! We tried to remain calm. I did not scream or freak out. We turned out the lights and locked the doors (just in case). With shaking hands, dh climbed slowly into the front seat, started the van, and hauled outta there! Although the curiosity was killing me, i didn't even try to peek outside. I didn't want to be the one that encouraged him to smack a window out or something. I just sat there and drank the last of my wine, and then crawled up into the front seat, which incidently was turned to face the back. DH contemplated turning the van around to have a closer look at him, or her, but he too thought better of it. At the bottom of the radio tower road, we stopped for a brief moment to regain



composure and put on our seatbelts. Since we didn't go for a ride that day, it was good to get our heart rates up a bit. I was never so happy to see the bright lights of bustling Wonowan, and the gas station parking lot, where we spent the night.

20.0 Where is that coolant coming from?

Around 11 am we sadly pulled into fort nelson sounding a bit like a miniature harley, with coolant leaking and heads bent (ours).

We are parked in front of the legendary fort nelson hotel, and my hopes and visions of seeing the inside of the rooms are diminishing.

we have just come from Dalex mechanics, where the young guy at the desk quipped that the only thing that can't pass a westfalia is a service station.

Well they could not find our so-called leak and say we are ok to go....we are hesitant, but at 2 pm yukon time are heading on down the road. for the last couple of days, we had noticed that the coolant in the overflow tank seemed to be dwindling, but that could have just been the whole system adjusting to

its new "look". We never saw any coolant on the road where we would be parked although we were often parked on grass. Darren commented at dave and joanne's that he loved the fact that the only thing dripping was the condensation from the muffler. This morning at tea-time, there was indeed yellow liquid dripping out. Well that



problem has for the moment hidden itself and the muffler is fixed, so hopefully we'll make it home with no further problems..... never a dull moment with an '83

From DH. We also conferred with Frank from Almont – he was sure it wasn't the head gasket, and it doesn't appear it isn't. Pressure tested and it won't leak so Frank say's if it doesn't leak under pressure it ain't leaking. And the nice nfld guy here said “you'll be alright with that van boy! Not to worry”. So here we go – back into the wilderness.

21.0 say no to tow trucks

Sun, rain, snow, sleet...we have seen it all today as we hit familiar territory. It's Wednesday, October 3rd and we have officially been away for 2 months. Home is very close by now as we pass Jake's Corner. The sun is intense at the moment. The mountains are too. I guess i have missed them, because they are amazing me, the fresh



white snow a stunning contrast against the dark blue sky.

We spent last night at Liard Hotsprings after a long, somewhat stressful day of driving. It was beautiful to see all the wildlife, elegant deer, elk, and my favorite, sweetness caribou with their white pumps on. We were both very happy to get over the pass with no difficulties, as they have had a few snowstorms recently. The sides of the highway had as much as a foot of snow in some places. The road was reasonably dry though, with the occasional section of flurries, and Emmitt performed well in the mountains. He has continued to lose more fluid, but only when we are not looking! As soon as we arrived at liard, we headed down for a much needed soak. It was great except for the irritating road crew who were drinking, swearing, and diving off the deck. They were supremely obnoxious, and the weary travelers trying to enjoy the healing waters, eventually gave up and came



back in the morning. It was wondrous, and we heated our bodies and souls as the wet snow fell. We were happy to be heading north. The weather to the south looked ugly, and i am sure the summit was getting its share of the white stuff.

Soon after we left liard, it stopped snowing but has been mostly cool and wet all day. Didn't seem to

phase the hulking buffalo sleeping on the side of the highway. I don't think much phases those guys! They have really huge noses! For the first time ever, we saw a gorgeous flock of sandhill cranes, and at least 30 hawks within a hundred kilometers. We assume they must be migrating as well, although they were always in pairs, or alone.



We did not pull out our bikes in the last two days, because of the weather, but we did see a cyclist approaching Summit Lake, and wondered about his state of

mind and body. With wet slippery conditions, poor light, and big transports cruising past at top speed, it does not seem like a good thing to try.

Before we say goodbye to outdoor biking for the season though, we are determined to ride the brand-spanking-new asphalt near Shallow Bay. They



were just finishing a new section of highway as we left. We are now watching for pigs and familiar faces as we pass Carcross Corner. CKRW just announced two porkers on the lose! Can't wait to get to our camping spot for the night.

We stayed there on the way down, and it is SWEET.

Seven-o-five Jarvis here we

22.0 Never a dull moment



After a lovely evening with georgi, forest and finn, complete with our favourite chicken curry and 2 games of SuperMunchkin, we left Emmitt in the driveway with a bucket underneath him, just to catch any of these so-called drips. We had topped him up with coolant after a brief stop in Watson Lake, and with the wetness from the highway, it

really was hard to see much underneath. We had a great restful night, and soon after breakfast, decided to run some errands, call friends for second coffee, and then head for home. As we both suspected, the bucket was bone dry, not a drop in there. Darren did notice that two more bolts next to the ones we so recently replaced in Fort Nelson, were loose and letting out exhaust. A quick fix and he started the engine to warm up the van, while we were chatting inside. After a few minutes we had a peek inside the bucket to see what might have come out while the engine was warming...and nothing. Maybe it magically fixed itself overnight?? We were about to jump in and drive, when dh noticed a large amount of yellow liquid flowing in the driveway in front of the van. "Oh man, someone's got troubles here. Whose car is leaking?" he says....YUP, THAT'S RIGHT, IT WAS US. A massive leakage coming from the direction of the radiator. Not a small periodic drip. Oh no. This was pouring out. No time for errands, except a 2 minute stop at Extra Foods parking lot. Yup, still coming out! We limped our way home, holding our breath and, going through various scenarios.



Maybe we just filled the whole system with too much liquid and it finally just blew, through some sort of overflow valve! Yah that sounds great! I'll take that one! Who knows for sure, but we parked it in our very own driveway, stuck a bucket underneath, and have yet to see another drop come out! Was he sad to know his road trip was ending, and let the tears flow? Or just so happy that he was home? Emmitt is a very sensitive and complicated guy, but we love him anyway.



Back at our cabin (with our Fort Saint John ice-block on the lawn)