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66-year-old Victor Bissonnette tackles perimeters of Lake Erie on his bicycle

by Matthew Reid

He's on the road again.

For the second year in a row, Acton resident Victor Bissonnette, 66, has tackled the task of cycling around the perimeter of one of the Great Lakes. This year's trek took him around the perimeter of Lake Erie, a distance of 1,170 km.

The journey took 12 days in total, nine days of cycling and three days of sightseeing. Bissonnette was accompanied byhis wife Carmen, fellow cyclist Ken Chupa, and his wife Norine Chupa.

This year's adventure took the four-person crew across Southwestern Ontario, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania and New York State, with 57 hours logged on the bike. They left from Fort Erie on August 23 and stayed at certain points, or "milestones," along the way. Stops included Port Dover, Port Stanley, Luna Pier, Michigan, Mentor, Ohio and Dunkirk, New York, just to name a few. The trip ended back at Fort Erie on September 3.

Bissonnette and Chupa travelled the highways and country roads that circled the enormous lake. They endured days of sun and heat, days of



TRUSTY BIKE: Victor Bissonnette shows off his bike at his home. He says the bike must have over 5,000 km on it by now.

rain, and days of uncomfortable wind.

Last summer, Bissonnette cycled around Lake Ontario, a trek that took nine days to complete. He chose to bike around Lake Erie this year because of its similar size.

"Lake Ontario was a very successful trip," says Bissonnette. "So the next logical one was Lake Erie."

Bissonnette, who turns 67 this November is also a type 2 diabetic. He was diagnosed in 2000, so he decided to take up hiking and biking to try and get his condition under control by means of diet and exercise. He has been off prescription drugs since 2004.

Training for such an endeavor required cycling trips that might seem horrendous to some, not to Bissonnette. His training for the Lake Erie tour included a ride from his front door close to Crewson's Corners, to Orillia and back in two days.

"It works out to be about 180 kms," explains Bissonnette, "We go a bit past Orillia to my brother-in-law's place, stay overnight, and cycle back the next day.'

Bissonnette says he would like to tour all the Great Lakes eventually. However, he thinks he and Ken Chupa will take the next year off. The remaining three lakes, Lake Superior, Huron and Michigan are at least twice as large as Lakes Erie and Ontario, therefore making them more of a challenge.

"Everything I've read says up around the Sault and the TransCanada, it's very dangerous, there is no shoulder, there's a lot of trucks," says Bissonnette. "For a large part it probably is not all that pleasant and very danger-

However, he says he would like to tackle either one or both of Lake Michigan or Lake Huron.

"If we did the four, I think that would be good," Bissonnette says.



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