

Says trip was easy

High school grad cycles to Nova Scotia

By Olga Darcovich

For several years Ronald Rentenaar dreamed of cycling down east. This summer he made the 1,103 mile trip from Georgetown to Bridgewater, Nova Scotia on his 10-speed Atala Norstar. Ron, the 19-year-old son of Mr. and Mrs. A. Rentenaar of R.R. 2, Georgetown, graduated from Milton District High School this spring. He chose Bridgewater as his destination because that's where his former classmate and neighbor John Houweling now lives. The Houwelings moved to Bridgewater, which is about 60 miles south of Halifax, four years ago.

Starting from Georgetown Aug. 7, Ron made the trip in 15 days. Most days he averaged 90 miles a day. His best day was his second one out when he rode 106 miles. His shortest day, one of the three on which it rained, he did 15 miles.

On his bike Ron carried a weight of 28 lbs. He learned through previous experience — he has made trips to Kingston and to Ottawa — that excess weight can unbalance a cyclist. Included in his gear were a tent, a couple of changes of clothes, a spare tire and tube, his tools and some emergency foods. He also took a notebook and a list of Canadian Tire stores along his route, in case he would need to get parts for his bike.

Ron has had his bike apart many times and is knowledgeable about bike repairs, a skill he learned from his father. He said it would be foolish to attempt a long cycling trip without an understanding of bicycle mechanics.

Fortunately, his trip was virtually problem-free. He changed his tire once on the trip because the old one was wearing out.

About the worst thing that happened to him was getting splattered with tar, he said. Travelling along a newly tarred road he was coated with the stuff as the wheels of his bike spewed tar at him. He was able to find some varsol at a gas station to clean his clothes.

Travelling from morning till dark Ron camped most nights in fields along the road. He ate in restaurants, because carrying food supplies would make his pack too heavy. Mid-morning and mid-

afternoon he stopped for rests.

On rainy nights he stayed at youth hostels. Although there were some cyclists in the hostels, most of the guests were hitchhikers, he said.

One particularly wet night he got a room through a Chamber of Commerce tourist booth. The woman who gave him lodging also made him supper, breakfast and a packed lunch, all for five dollars.

When he felt the need to get cleaned up Ron stayed at a camp site. At four dollars a night, they were too expensive to stay at regularly, he said. The entire bike trip cost him \$113, including meals.

Ron left Georgetown travelling alone but he soon met up with other cyclists and had company for most of the trip. Three cyclists he met were going across Canada on their bikes.

The majority of the cyclists were boys in their late teens or early 20's. The few female cyclists he saw were all travelling in the opposite

direction, he reported.

Lacking the ability to converse in French was a handicap, Ron discovered. "It was rough, but I found if you made an attempt at their language, they would help you out," he said.

Although he carried a radio in his pack he used it only to tune in to weather forecasts. Entertainment was meeting and talking to people. He never felt lonely. "I'm not the type to feel homesick," he said.

Although Ron had no unpleasant incidents with drivers on the highways other cyclists he met had encountered some difficulty.

"You have to drive (your bicycle) defensively," he said. "You have to be on guard all the time. Use your hand signals and make your presence known."

He found the going more troublesome in towns. Although vehicles moved over for him, they didn't slow down when passing. This creates a draft which can blow a cyclist off the road, he

said.

Transport drivers were the most careful about cyclists, he found. Cross-country buses were the worst. "They don't know what kind of draft they create and they don't move over for you."

Ron's route took him on major and secondary roads. When the traffic was heavy he rode on the paved shoulders; when light, on the road.

After leaving Georgetown he crossed Toronto via Sheppard Ave. Hwy 2 took him across Ontario and to Montreal. From Montreal he travelled east, then followed the Richelieu River valley to the south side of the St. Lawrence River.

"It was scenic and there was no traffic," he recalled about that portion of his journey. Following the south shore of the St. Lawrence brought him to Riviere-du-Loup, where he left the river. From there to the New Brunswick border he rode via the Trans Canada Hwy. and hit his first mountainous roads. "It takes

a long time, but with a 10-speed you can get up hills," he said. "If a transport can get up it, I can."

He estimated he climbed to 2,000 feet in New Brunswick from sea level at Riviere-du-Loup.

In New Brunswick his route took him to Fredricton and St. John along the shores of the St. John River. "Fredricton is a very beautiful city. It's an old city, but very clean," Ron commented. He was especially impressed with the many stately elms in downtown Fredricton.

He made a shortcut of about 150 miles by taking the ferry from St. John to Digby, Nova Scotia. Arriving in Digby after dark, he had to ride a further 15 miles to find a camping spot. It was the only time he rode at night. The last leg of his journey was from Digby to Bridgewater.

"But I sure wished I'd had gloves!" He added the sun soon warmed up the day but crops in that part of the country were behind the crops here. The dullest part of the trip was the route through Eastern Ontario, the part he covered his third day between Kingston and the Quebec border. "The scenery was all the same," he said.

"The political tension in the area was really bad," he went on. "You could feel it in the air. They had no kind words for anyone who is French-speaking."

There was not a car, not a soul anywhere. The air was crystal clear. When the sun came up over the mountains across the St. Lawrence, it was so beautiful...

to his job in Streetsville, where he worked on road maintenance crews. He would try to make the trip as fast as he could. The training paid off. He said his trip to the Maritimes was easy and he attributes this to his fitness.

One week after their son left on his trip Mr. and Mrs. Rentenaar left by car for the same destination. They met just outside Riviere-du-Loup and camped together one night before continuing their separate journeys.

Ron returned home by car with his family. "I didn't have time to bicycle both ways," he said. "I'm not sure that I would want to travel the same area twice," he added.

Mrs. Rentenaar had some reservations about her son's trip. "I thought it was an awful long trip to take by himself," she said. "I wanted him to go with someone else. But, he made out all right."

There are no more bike trips in Ron's immediate future. This fall he starts first year engineering at Queen's University in Kingston. He'll be living in residence, so there won't be room or need for a bike. Summers, he expects to spend working.

But the dream of cycling east has been achieved only to be replaced by another dream. Someday, Ron would like to make a trip to Western Canada on his bike.



THIS 10-SPEED BIKE carried Ron Rentenaar over 1,000 miles to Nova Scotia. Ron is a graduate of Milton District High School.

Police assaulted

A Hanover man collided with two parked cars, assaulted security guards and Halton Regional Police before he was put into custody.

Police report the man had been drinking at Mohawk Raceway, where he is employed. Halton Regional Police report they have charged the man with leaving the scene of an accident, assaulting an officer and common assault.

—A large crowd attended the Hospital Auxiliary lawn party and art show Saturday.

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