

Pedal

September 1990

\$1.95

8071

Canadian Cycling News

Atlantic Canada Bicycle Rally

by Mary Langille

Onlookers smiled, clapped and waved as 209 cyclists from 13 states and six provinces pedaled through the quiet university town of Wolfville, in Nova Scotia's Annapolis Valley. This parade of cyclists kicked off the 1990 Atlantic Bicycle Rally, August 3-6.

At this rally everyone, kids to seniors, and every bike, clunky to state-of-the-art, fit in.

Rally manager Gary Conrod, a lanky 33-year-old, buzzed-out on organizational overdrive, explained, "At this event, I don't want the typical bicycle snobs, the kind with ointment on their nose. Well — they're welcome to come, but only if they are willing to ride alongside 9-year-olds and talk to them."

An ideal location for a bike rally, the Annapolis Valley, flanked on both sides by ridges known as the North and South Mountains, offers flat and hilly terrain with pastoral and coastal scenery on low-traffic roads.

With the sounds of shifting gears and calls of "car back", the rally featured 14 different escorted tours, from 28 to 110 km, for riders of all abilities.

The shortest ride stopped for lunch and a swim at a small lake on the south ridge, followed by a gradual climb to the top of Gaspereau Mountain for a panoramic view of the entire area. The longest ride went up and over the North Mountain to the quiet fishing village of Harbourville. One ride travelled over a section of 200-year-old dykes built to hold back the Bay of Fundy tides, the highest in the world.

If participants didn't make new friends during the day-long rides, the field day events, designed to dissolve inhibitions, were a sure bet. It was impossible to keep a straight face as adult competitors raced across the field on children's bicycles.

At the lobster banquet on the last night

of the rally, participants spontaneously gave a standing ovation to 79-year-old Hugh Hewes of Caledon, Ontario, who bicycled all the way (3400 km) from home to attend the ACBR.

This year, for the first time ever, the ABCR featured a post-rally tour. 23 rally participants stayed on to get to know each other better and ride 400 km along the Bay of Fundy shore and through the Annapolis Valley.

Now in its fourth year, the rally has contributed greatly to organized cycling in Nova Scotia. The first ACBR, held on the north shore of Nova Scotia in New Glasgow, gave rise to the Pictou County Bicycle Club.

The ACBR also gets novices interested in cycling. Darlene Parker of Dartmouth, N.S. tacked the rally onto the end of a camping trip she was taking with her two children. Not a serious cyclist before, Parker is now considering joining her local club, Vélo Halifax.

The 1991 ACBR will be held August 2-5, in Riverport, on the south shore of Nova Scotia in Lunenburg County. For more information, write to the Atlantic Canada Bicycle Rally, P.O. Box 1555, Station M, Halifax, Nova Scotia, B3J 2Y3.

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