



# Class of 65 Newsletter

## Edition 42-October 2011



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### Editor's Corner

**Roger Chiasson** has continued the travel theme this month with some thoughts following a recent visit he and Bonnie made to China.

**Dave Spicer** shares a somewhat different type of travel experience as he relates his experience in the 2011 Granfondo bike race from Vancouver to Whistler -not quite as long as some of the other trips that have been reported, but considerably more strenuous!

Before getting to those, the Ottawa-based gang met for its monthly luncheon gathering at a local restaurant and there was the usual good turnout - **Archer, Auns, Braham, Bury, Cale, Carruthers, Clarkson, Colfer, Diamond, Forbes (Navy), Houlston, Humphrey, Lukey, McQuinn, Nellestyn, and Spence**. At my end of the table there was a discussion about the relative merits of travelling by train in Canada. The general consensus was that it was too expensive but **Jim Cale** reminded us of the DND fare reductions and others applicable to seniors and provided the following reminder that might be of interest to others:

#### *VIA RAIL*

*Via offers a discount, which I believe is 25%, on all fares (including seniors 2 for 1) for serving and former military personnel. Proof of service is required. There used to be a special number, but now just call VIA. I asked if bookings can be done on line and I was told yes but it is complicated.*

#### *OC Transpo*

*For those in the Ottawa area, OC Transpo is free for all seniors Mon and Fri afternoon and all day Wed.*

## THE CHINA TRAVEL EXPERIENCE

By 6606 Roger Chiasson



Al Kennedy's article in the last edition has prompted me to share our recent China odyssey. As some of you know, Bonnie and I had the privilege of spending three years in Tokyo, Japan, where I served as the Canadian Forces Attaché from 1995 to 1998. In 2006 we returned to Japan with a number of friends, and we were about to return for a second time with yet another group when the earthquake/tsunami/radiation event scuppered that idea. We decided to turn that disappointment into an opportunity.

Once the decision was made to abort the Japan trip, I immediately started surfing the web for information on China tourism. The first website that popped up was [www.chinaspree.ca](http://www.chinaspree.ca). I want to make it clear that I have no shares in China Spree, but that I heartily endorse them as an excellent company with whom to embark on a trip to China. As I always do when I am researching travel options, I focused on customer reviews - not only on the China Spree website, but on other sites, such as Trip Advisor. Suffice it to say that from the moment we decided to go to China to our departure from that amazing country, we could not have asked for more. I was on the phone to them on a daily basis at first, because we had to deal with such issues as short notice for visas, etc. They couldn't do enough for us, and that level of service continued throughout. The "country guide" (a native Chinese who accompanied us throughout the trip), as well as the local tour guides, were exceptional - they were very knowledgeable, their English was excellent, and their pride in country was contagious. We chose the 16-day "Best of China and Hong Kong" tour, but there are many other options to choose from.

I had learned through media coverage and considerable reading that China was an "emerging" country. But I was wrong: ***China has emerged!*** I had been to China almost 25 years ago as part of the National Defence College

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course, and had seen signs then of change amidst the inertia of decades of stagnation during the Mao era. Beijing was in a state of transformation, with single-story "hutongs" giving way to skyscrapers, and the gradual introduction of the automobile to replace bicycles and scooters. Shanghai was still a crowded, stagnant backwater.

To quote our young tour guides, the Chinese national bird is now the construction crane. Beijing and Shanghai are in automotive gridlock, which, admittedly, is not the best sign of progress. The Pudong area of Shanghai, across the Yellow River from the Bund, which had been nothing but empty fields 25 years ago, is now strewn with skyscrapers. The investment in infrastructure in China in the last few decades is nothing short of spectacular. As an example, we were told that there are currently 200 subway stations under construction in Shanghai, a city of over 22 million people!

But, aside from the tremendous economic progress made in China, it remains the cradle of some of the most amazing historical and cultural sights in the world: the Great Wall, Tiananmen Square, the Forbidden City, the Summer Palace, the Xi'an Terracotta Soldiers, the Li River and the Panda Reserve.

This is not to say that China is perfect. It would be naïve to ignore China's problems, such as over-population, civil rights violations, large disparities between rich coastal areas and poor hinterlands, and rampant pollution, but by the same token, we owe it to ourselves to get to know the Middle Kingdom and its treasures.

I could go on, but I will leave you to contemplate China as a future travel destination. It will change your view of the world in so many ways. And, in our opinion, you could not do better than to go with China Spree as your travel agent.

We love sharing our travel stories, so if any of you would like more information, please call (902-445-5905) or email ([chiassonr@ns.sympatico.ca](mailto:chiassonr@ns.sympatico.ca)).

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*By the way - we have rescheduled our trip to Japan for 7-21 April 2012, and there have been a few withdrawals from the original list, so if you are interested in joining us, give us a shout. We have developed a very thorough itinerary, with a few rest days, using Tokyo as a hub, but including a few out-of town day drips. We would love to show you "our Japan"!*

## 2011 Whistler GranFondo

By 6572 David Spicer



Have you ever had a moment when you think *"I really wish I had done that"*. It's usually prefixed to the statement, *"Too late now, I think I'm just a bit over the hill"*. Whether it's a physical or mental challenge, think again, there just may be some life left in the old brain/body.

I had always wanted to ride a bike from Vancouver to Whistler, but as of a year ago, it was just another item on the has-been list. I last rode my road bike about 10 years ago. I particularly remember the ride, coming home after only about 5 miles; sore shoulder, sore neck and a very sore back. The bike was relegated to its hanger with mutterings about gifting or eBay. By 2009 all aforementioned pains had gotten worse, to the point where on recommendation of a pro level athlete friend, I visited a Registered Massage Therapist. Turns out I had dislocated my left shoulder 40 years previously. It had never been reset and now the gremlins were coming home to roost. After numerous painful sessions of being "straightened out", the verdict was in. Get a shoulder replacement, which I did in Mar of 2010. With more RMT, physio and weights the thoughts occasionally drifted back to the old Maranoni road bike. Then last November, I listened to the remarkable story of a 62 year "old" friend, a 250 lb. Metabolic Syndrome poster boy. He related his doctor's advice to change his lifestyle or suffer the dire consequences. Result; he rode the 2010 Whistler GranFondo, a 4000 strong mass bike ride from Vancouver to Whistler. As so many of us say, *"well if he can do it, so can I"*. Thus started my long forgotten dream of riding to Whistler.

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As there's no commitment like a non refundable financial commitment, I put the \$250.00 registration fee on the line and signed up for the 2011 GranFondo. Now before we rush out and commit ourselves to some outrageous physical goals, there are a few considerations that have to be taken into account. Is the old body really up to it? Get a full physical and ease into the first couple of months of training under medical supervision. Listen to the body. Do some background reading. The book "Younger Next Year" is a good start. [http://www.amazon.ca/s/ref=nb\\_sb\\_noss?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=Younger-Next-Year-Chris-Crowley%2F&x=0&y=0](http://www.amazon.ca/s/ref=nb_sb_noss?url=search-alias%3Daps&field-keywords=Younger-Next-Year-Chris-Crowley%2F&x=0&y=0).

Nutrition and supplementation are also a big part of any physical plan. [http://www.univerascience.com/main.html/library/articles\\_wp2/browse](http://www.univerascience.com/main.html/library/articles_wp2/browse). I had already been under the diet & nutrition guidance of my beautiful wife, Louise for several years. Having cured herself of terminal triple negative breast cancer by alternative/complementary and "natural" means <http://www.canceriscurablenow.com/> over the last 4 years, she certainly had my full attention and cooperation from the nutritional perspective. Without this support, training at this level would have been difficult if not impossible.

The most interesting thing to note during the months of training, was the reversal of many age-related symptoms. In particular the left knee, subjected to 5 major injuries over the years, gave no problems & improved over the summer. Mental acuity, mood, immune system, body fat, and other blood markers all improved.

Louise & I are fortunate to live in a condo on the UBC Campus, a bike - friendly community surrounded by some of the best road & mountain biking terrain in Vancouver. Training started in May with gentle mountain bike rides accompanied by Louise in neighbouring Pacific Spirit Park, with its 50 km of forest trails. (Some of these were hacked out of the bush by **Bowie Keefer** in the late 1960's. Thanks again Bowie.) By June I was on my tuned up, polished up, 18 year old Maranoni, & I must admit, she felt pretty good.

Southwest Marine Dr & Spanish Banks provide a very convenient 20 km road

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loop comprising a long 5 km gradual climb and a shorter, steeper 2 km climb. With a month of that under my already notched down belt, it was time to start some serious training. Fortunately there is a fitness studio just down the street that specializes in triathlon training.

<http://fitfxstudio.com/default.php> If you check out the home page, my coach is the girl on the left. As well as holding National & World road racing championships, she is also a former cardiac care nurse, quite fitting considering what I was getting myself into.

All July & August I rode twice a week in her group training sessions, usually comprised of 8-14 riders. The Wednesday evening ride usually focused on the hills around West Point Gray. Saturdays' were longer rides to Richmond for peloton & speed work on the flats, or the North Shore for more serious hills. The group was rather rag tag, consisting of a wide range of ages with the average being late 30s. We had hot young chicks, wide body housewives, students & middle aged professionals. Then there was me, the most rag tag of all with vintage clothing and a museum piece for a bike, gasping along at the rear. However I soon got the message & gradually upgraded my kit. That included a new bike, a Specialized Roubaix Pro

<http://www.specialized.com/us/en/bc/SBCBkModel.jsp?spid=45811&eid=4352> for \$5000. Now there is a commitment; 10 more years of Fondo riding, God willing.

Anyway it all came together for the 10th Sept race day. I left home at 5:30 on a perfect morning. Pitch dark with a peach coloured glow on the eastern horizon, 16 deg C, calm winds and utter stillness on the traffic-free roads. Riding through Kitsilano, I was joined at every intersection by more & more silent ghost-like riders, till we arrived on Georgia St in groups of dozens. At 7:00 AM, after the National Anthem sung by Jim Cuddy of Blue Rodeo, we started off, all 7000 riders. The ride was spectacular and went without incident. The route to Whistler is 122 Km with 7800 vertical feet of climbing. There were 4 official rest stops with all services including food & drink, even wine if you wanted it. I made 1 stop & finished in a time of 5:06, 78th in the 60-69 age group. Next year I'll be shooting for a serious position in the 70+ group.

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TSN2 has produced an excellent 1/2 hour documentary which is currently airing on TSN2. Here is the best short clip available now.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ebWxfQ413Mc&NR=1> . It is the official YouTube clip from 2010. Enjoy!

TDV, DTB\* Dave Spicer 6572

\*That's "Drive The Body" in case you have forgotten. Thanks Staff Lily, Sgt Vondette & Sgt Haywood. It still works.

## Closing Notes

Thanks again to our contributors for some interesting insights into what classmates are getting into fifty years later. Janet and I have recently got back into biking - not quite as ambitious as Dave - but with a couple of decent new road bikes we try to get out a couple of times a week (unfortunately, our biking year is a bit shorter than Dave's) and put in 25-50 kilometres at a time, taking full advantage of the great bike trails throughout the Ouatouais Region.

Until next time I look forward to hearing from all of you and sharing your thoughts, ideas and experiences.