

Doug Parton

Spectacular 9-Day Ride Celebrates BC's 150th Birthday of Becoming a Crown Colony

Fort Langley to Jacobson Lake, Headwaters of the Tulameen River

On our first day, all riders, horses, and mules rode around the inside of Fort Langley.

It may have been 100 years since a horse last left his DNA in the Fort.

The ride followed the Trans Canada Trail—a collection of historic trails and modern connections of those trails that link across Canada. It is the world's longest trail.

The ride proceeded east on River Road, where the original trail is encased in blacktop and covered in train tracks. After 2 days, the riders got around Sumas Mountain, then followed the Vedder Canal.



Mules pioneered BC, too.

After Cultus Lake, the trails were dirt. We rode along old logging roads running parallel to the south side of the Chilliwack River.

We saw many historical logging artifacts along the way. Huge old cedar stumps remained from the shakebolt loggers of yesterday. One such stump had a door and a roof.

Much adrenalin was produced by both horse and rider as we crossed the river at Chilliwack Lake on an aluminum bridge. My horse Casey, a heavy quarter horse/percheron-cross, had the structure swaying like a suspension bridge. The more it swung, the more Casey's eyes bulged and the more exciting it got for me!

The next leg of the ride is part of the Historical Whatcom Trail—Bellingham Bay to the Gold Rush Fields, to bypass Victoria and the British tolls. Then we rode over Paleface Pass (4800-foot elevation) to the Skagit Valley. The Pass trail goes through a ghostly yellow cedar forest for 10 miles—with bear scat every 200 feet, then up the Skagit River, a world-class flyfishing river.



Jim McRae with his string



Doug and Casey in the large cedars along Skagit River Trail

The trail is surrounded by Rhododendrons, very large cedars, and firs, making a beautiful ride in the Park. When we found a section washed out by the river, we had to reconstruct the trail on a steep shale slope so we could proceed. It was a crude job, but we got through. We forded the Skagit River to Summalo Grove on the Hope Princeton Highway, then to Cascade—also on the Hope Princeton Highway.



George Ralph inside Fort Langley



Carleigh Paterson on her horse Bergen at Fort Langley, ready to start



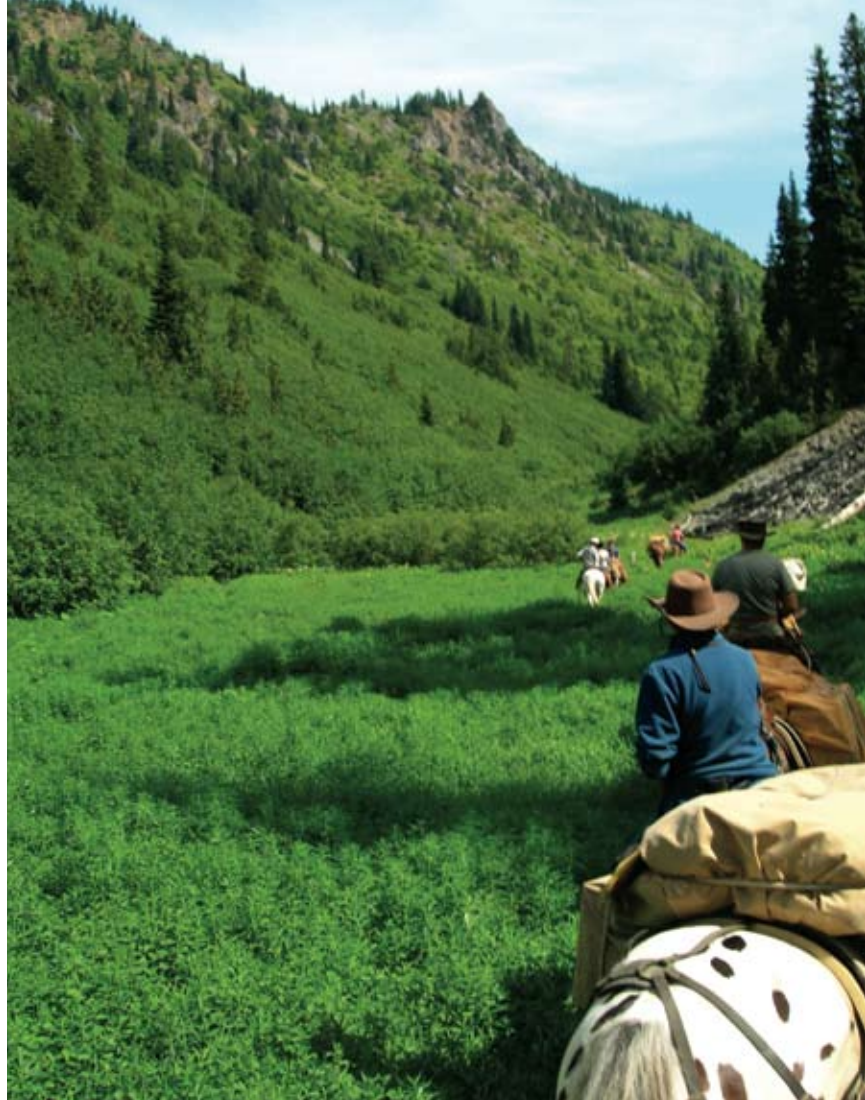
Rose Schroeder on her horse Rusty

Next day we followed the Whatcom Trail to the Dewdney Trail and climbed further up the Coast Divide at Paradise Valley (5000-foot elevation) in the Cascade wilderness. We rode the Warburton Loop Trail to Warburton Cabin and went on to White Cloud Lake.

The last day of the ride, we followed the Hudson's Bay Brigade Trail to Jacobson Lake where we joined more Back Country horse riders from the Coast and Princeton.

With 40 riders and 50 to 60 horses, we finished the ride at Jacobson Lake where the Parks people held a ceremony. Two elderly pioneers of the area—Mr. Jacobson and Mr. Rice—cut ribbons and a cake and shook hands. ▲

Vancouver Notary **Doug Parton** is a member of the Back Country Horsemen of BC. To read his previous two articles about this historic ride, please see Volume 17, Numbers 1 and 2, 2008. www.notaries.bc.ca/scrivener



Pack string headed to Paradise Valley



Relaxing at a giant cedar stump



Brian Harder needed a bath.



The Chilliwack River



Sheryl Boyd riding Sonny

A Typical Day

The July weather was great so we slept under the stars. On only two mornings did I awake to the feel of a fine Scotch mist on my face.

Travelling by horse makes a long day. After I woke up, I fed and watered my horse, rolled up my bunk while making coffee and breakfast, then ate, tacked the horses and pack horses, broke camp, loaded packs, hitched the horses in order, and geared up the rider (me). We all left camp at the same time and rode all day, then found a new camp for the night, blew off all the horse gear, and tacked, fed and watered the animals, fed the riders, had a drink, and crawled into bed.

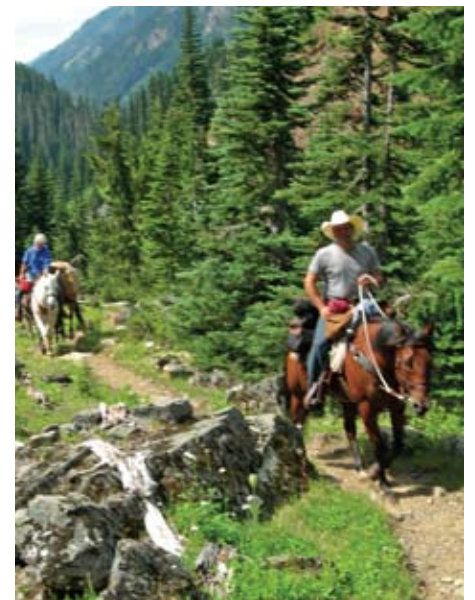
There was no time or room for tents, but there were horse pads and top pack covers to lie on. Sleeping out in the open is a comfortable, natural, and rewarding experience.



Beaver dam in Warburton meadow



Sometimes, we had to take the road. Here's Dan McDonald in the lead.



Craig riding Codey



Carleigh takes Casey for a drink.



Lupine in wildflower meadow, Paradise Valley



Peter Thiessen on Big Red



Brian Harder on his horse Winchester on the Skagit River



Warburton cabin, recently structurally upgraded by Val Owens



Doug's rig in Warburton meadow