

Real estate professionals cycle across Canada

Dave Procter and George Skerratt take on tough assignments to raise money for their favourite causes.

By Susan Doran

There are real estate professionals all over Canada doing good works, but chances are few of them spend as much time in bicycle shorts as Dave Procter and George Skerratt.

Both men are enthusiastic cyclists who separately embraced the idea of using a marathon bike ride to raise money for a cause they believe in. The theme their stories share struck us as a good reason to profile them both here.

Procter, 49, of Re/Max Dave Procter Realty in Comox, B.C., is still in training for his ride, scheduled to begin this June.

Skerratt, 57, a sales rep with

nations and youth.

Skerratt's personal contribution was over \$10,000.

The cyclists were hosted and fed by local church groups along the way. Their sleeping accommodations ranged from churches (naturally) to sports arenas, schools and even – in Montreal – a monastery.

"The secret to getting a good night's sleep was to isolate you from the snorers and wear ear plugs," says Skerratt.

He made sure he was in shape for the trip, having spent the previous year training on a

full-time paramedic with Kwartha Lakes Emergency Medical Services.

Skerratt himself remained relatively unscathed during the journey. "I didn't swallow a bug the whole route!" he says.

Procter thinks of the marathon as "the perfect mental and physical challenge" as he meets the half-century milestone. All the better that it's for a good cause, he believes.

Although he's never lost a family member to breast cancer, he's had friends and clients with the disease, and his wife has been involved in fund-raising activities

nights at campgrounds, which is a challenge," he says.

His fund-raising goal is \$100,000 and although he's not close yet, the ball is in motion. He recently sent a mass mailing out to 2,500 clients requesting support. He's getting some fund-raising assistance from local businesses. He has set up a website (www.comoxvalleyrealty.com) to handle on-line pledges and provide ongoing information about

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Coldwell Banker R.M.R. in Lindsay, Ont., completed his marathon bicycle ride last summer.

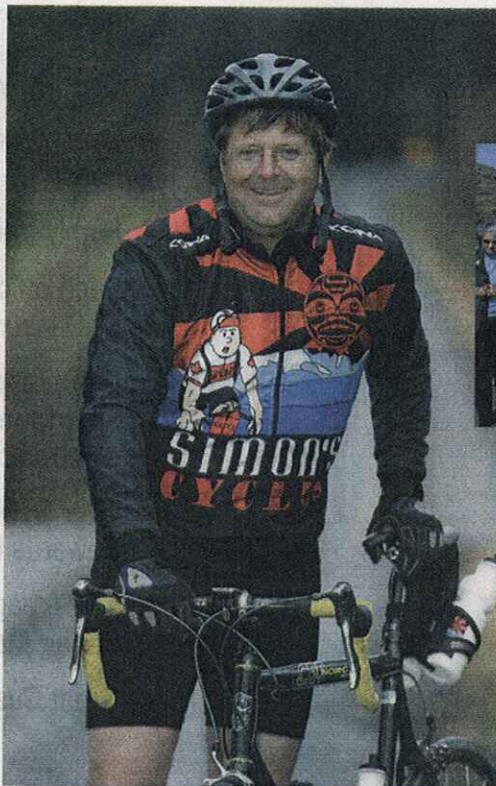
Skerratt is a grandfather who broke his back when he hit a ditch while mountain biking several years ago. But that didn't stop him from joining more than 50 other cyclists (and about 20 support staff) from across Canada last July 2 for a 7,800-kilometre journey across the country, beginning in Victoria and ending in Newfoundland.

Billed as "The Bike for Bibles Centennial Ride," the 64-day marathon marked the 100th anniversary of the Canadian Bible Society and raised more than \$500,000 for the organization's translation, publication and distribution projects, targeted at inner-city ministries, prisons, first

stationary bike in his living room. Once on the road, he was on the bike six to eight hours daily and averaged 141 km a day. "And I was determined to enjoy it," he says.

He did much more than that, experiencing such a profound sense of physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing along the route that he says it took him three weeks to "come back down" afterwards. Which is not to say he didn't encounter obstacles, including exploding tires, driving rain, and a tractor-trailer that ran him off the road.

When other cyclists suffered cuts, bruises or other minor injuries, they were no doubt glad to have Skerratt along – besides being a Realtor since 1989, he's a



Dave Procter



George Skerratt and Henk Derix carry injured cyclist Joann Derix as the group makes the final push to the finish.

for breast cancer research.

The B.C. Cancer Foundation is assisting in collecting donations through its website, and Realtors across the country have been calling to pledge support and to offer to cycle portions of the trip with him, Procter says.

"One couple is doing the whole province of Manitoba with me," he says. "The (local) real estate board called and they want to take my cause across Canada, fundraising through other brokers. It is getting bigger than I thought it would..."

"A number of agents are even saying we're welcome to pull into their driveway for the night."

He's appreciative, as most trip costs are coming out of his own pocket. "We have to arrange 55

his progress.

He has also been getting a lot of local media interest, so much in fact that colleagues are pointing out there's no way he can back out now. Not that he intends to.

"My wife at first thought I was nuts, but now that she's on board she's a really good organizer," he says. "I want to put something back into the community... I've done a lot of research... And anyway, nothing can be worse than what I've gone through while training the last few months. I was so cold after one ride I had to sit in the tub for two hours."

He had a skiing accident two years ago and needs a leg brace for some types of exercise, but not cycling. He's in good shape, and ready, he says.

However, the actual birthday celebration when he turns 50 on June 18 will have to wait until he gets back, he says. ■ REM

Forget gifts. Send money.

For Dave Procter's upcoming 50th birthday, he's spending the summer riding his bike across the country, fundraising for breast cancer research for the B.C. Cancer Foundation, beginning in Victoria on June 23.

His wife, Leah Reichelt (a Realtor in the same Re/Max office) and children from their blended families will be traveling along in a 40-foot motor home.