



AROUND VERMONT IN 47 DAYS!

Wendy Copp
circumnavigates the state on a mare named Jolie
during the summer of 2006



Around Vermont in 47 Days

This narrative is written mostly by Wendy Copp who has ridden her horse in a big circle practically around the state of Vermont. The words in italics were written by Gina Lancaster who has put together this print-out and a web page:

http://www.vermonthorse.com/wendy_copp/wendys_description_2006.html

Wendy's original message received in March of 2006.

In preparation for a long ride across Canada in '07 I am planning to circumnavigate Vermont this summer. My plan is to contact as many riders around the state as I can and have each one show me her/his back road and trail routes from place to place. I'm hoping to piece together a ride that will be a month or two long and will use as many trails as possible. In the process I would like to create a map so that others, who are inclined, can do the same thing. I will have camping equipment, and also hope to be able to stay with various people who are interested in participating. If you have any suggestions about who might be interested in this project, or how I might get the word out, please let me know.

On the 17th of June Wendy Copp of South Burlington started out on the Canadian mare, Jolie, from Shelburne Vermont. She headed south along the western side of the state. Here are two descriptions she wrote to describe the first part of her trip.



Let's see. My saddle is a custom made endurance saddle made by a fellow named Fred Pokrinchak at www.saddleranch.com. It weighs only 14 pounds and has a flexible panel tree, which seems to be working beautifully. I replaced the fenders with ones made by Torsion, and also exchanged the nylon billets with leather ones. I use two pads - a wool felt one and a wool blanket. They've worked well,

except that they don't stay in place when I'm off my horse walking down steep hills. I use a mohair string girth.

I'm carrying about 42 pounds in my saddle bags - 12 pounds in front, when my water bottles are full - and 30 pounds in back. I've packed a tent, sleeping bag, airflow mattress, D-cell battery fence charger, 4 fence poles cut into 3 pieces with connectors attached, 4 insulators and enough hot tape to make a small 25 x 25 paddock, first aid equipment for both Jolie and I, toiletries, Leather man, headlamp, pepper spray, rain poncho, really good rain pants and jacket, portable water bucket, tape recorder and notebook, about 5 pounds of grain, combination curry/brush, hoof pick, mane comb, insect repellent for horse and human, food for me (jerky, nuts, fruit, bread, cheese yogurt etc. I've been able to replenish my food at the occasional little store I come across, or at the various farms where people have invited me in) 2 pairs of socks, 3 underwear, extra t-shirt and long sleeved shirt, 1 pair of pants., 1 extra horseshoe. I think that's everything. I didn't bring a stove because I just didn't have any more room...



The Leatherman and headlamp have been particularly indispensable. You might notice that my hat looks a bit peculiar... it's because I'm wearing a detachable sun visor which has been great in both bright sun and pouring rain. People have told me I look like a traveling gardener or a samurai. The thing seems to be a Rorschach test of sorts. All I know is that it works really well!

Yes, I'm on my way. I started last week on Saturday the 17th and rode from Shelburne to Ferrisburgh, Ferrisburgh to Bridport, Bridport to Orwell, Orwell to Half Moon State Park above Lake Bomoseen, Lake Bomoseen to Castleton, Castleton to Wells, and then to Manchester. After resting for a few days we hit the trail again and headed from Manchester south through East

Arlington, and then turned and headed east into the mountains toward Stratton. Yesterday we traveled from Stratton to Jamaica, where I am now, waiting for the rain to slow down....

The ride along the western side of the state paralleling Lake Champlain was exceptional. The land is soft and open and rolling and most everything we traveled was dirt road, trail or old stage coach road. Last week was relatively clear with the exception of a few monstrous thunderstorms - one of which we were caught in (very scary!) and the various folks who rode with me were wonderful, supplying accommodations for both me and my horse... Monday, this week, however, the rains began again and it was a wild and soggy night we spent on the mountaintop on the way to Stratton. Yesterday was beautiful and lovely reprieve from the day before. My horse has done really well, though last week one of the folks riding with me took us into the woods hoping to find a shortcut over to Black Pond Road and we vanished into the mud and rocks for about 4 hours and ended up going in an enormous circle that tired the animals and put me behind schedule.... but it was fun spending time with the person in question and she felt so bad she took us back to her house for the night and then trailered us back to where we left off the day before....

Anyway, I think it would be great to be on the Horse Council website. I think if more people knew that this kind of horse travel is doable they might do it themselves... and, as I might have mentioned, I want to create a map from this trip so that others can ride in some of these places. Most maps don't designate whether something is a dirt road or not and I think that would be very useful to riders... it sure would be useful to me...

Now I'm figuring out where to head from Jamaica and I'm wondering if you can tell me exactly where you and I should meet up so I can work my way in that direction.... One thing I'm hoping to do is find people who are willing to supply accommodations for my horse and I if this rain persists. I'm traveling with full camping equipment and have a tiny speed fence paddock for my horse but having gotten quite soggy the other night I'd love to have occasional opportunities to dry out. I'm going to call chambers of commerce for suggestions....

Wendy's second description of some of the same parts. I used all of it because both descriptions are so wonderful:

I've pasted in a short description of my ride last week and a more elaborate description of this week. I can list all the roads I've been on so that you can create some kind of map - I'm not sure I'll be around many computers on this trip so the commentary may be sporadic... Later today I hope I'll be able to e-mail you a picture...

I had a great start to my trip last week - (June 17) with the exception of a few monstrous thunderstorms - one of which found me on a mountain with a great woman who was attempting to show me a shortcut - and who instead took us on an exploration through the forest that carried us in an enormous circle - the weather was clear and the riding was fabulous. Along the west side of Vermont, paralleling Lake Champlain is a beautiful expanse of farmland bisected by wonderful dirt roads, old stage coach roads and trails. Early in the week it was hot, so we got started each morning around 4:30 and were able to pull up for the day by early afternoon.

For the first few days I rode with various people who took me on trails I never would have found myself, and who kindly put me up and supplied accommodation for my horse as well. Because we got lost on the aforementioned mountain one day, riding on deeply muddy trails, my horse was

exhausted and my schedule set back a bit. I was hoping to reach Manchester on Wednesday - having started from Burlington on Saturday. Instead I found my way down to the small town of Wells on Thursday - with two loose shoes and a tired horse-wondering what my chance of finding a farrier were on short notice at the end of the day, and wondering also where I would find a place for the two of us for the night..

In the midst of mulling these thoughts I passed a house with a wonderful pair of people (Laura Bitter and Steve Kainen) who called out to me - “Hey, where are you going? Do you need water? Does your horse need water?...” Needless to say they absorbed us into their backyard, put me up in their camper, found me a place for my horse, and most amazing of all had a neighbor who was a farrier... who upon seeing my horse’s feet, went home to get his equipment and turned up with another farrier in tow. - So not one but two farriers went to work... unheard of anywhere...



Finally in Manchester the next day, I gave Jolie, my horse a few days off and then hit the road again on Monday the 26th. The folks who rode with me last week were Cindy Cooke, who arranged the route to Ann Marie Kimberly's, Ann Marie got us to Robin Severy's - Robin got us to Jean Audet's - Jean Audet got us to Half Moon Pond State park above Lake Bomaseen. Howard Oosterman my farrier rode one day and provided evening support and Hannah Oosterman, his daughter rode with me for three days.

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I'm currently holed up in Jamaica at a wonderful little house along the West River - while outdoors the rains continue in plumes of gray and cloud and wet and endlessness. We (my friend Ann Pierce was riding with me for a few days) began this phase of our ride on Monday in relative dryness, but as we rode down to East Arlington, and then turned and started climbing into the mountains we entered another ecosystem of cold and serious rain and soon found ourselves in a vortex of forests and wind, and roaring (I mean roaring) rivers.. There was no pasture anywhere of course, and though there were potential campsites along the way we rode for 12 hours before finally finding a small glade- where in the 1800's Daniel Webster spoke to a crowd of 15,000. (What? Why here? We asked ourselves - out in the wilderness of nowhere - we later learned that our infinite dirt road used to be the main road to Boston) Still in the driving rain we set up our horse fences, clipped together the tent, and dove in to try and dry out ... however... as dusk came on, Ann's horse became quite restive - and looked like he might run through the fence, so out Ann went into the night, wrapped in her poncho and sleeping bag, found herself a stump and sat on it through the very, very densely dark hours... it did stop raining during the night, but intermittently powerful blasts of wind continued to spook her horse, and so she continued to sit... meanwhile I of course didn't sleep either, and stared at the tent ceiling listening to the coyotes on the next ridge and a very loud hooting which was later identified as a Bear..



With my friend Ann Pierce, in Stratton after our long rainy night up at The Daniel Webster Memorial park

In the morning, it was miraculously clear and we packed up our soggy stuff and decided to make for Jamaica where Ann's friend, N.J., lives with her husband in the aforementioned cabin and octagonal workshop where everything is ingeniously roped to the ceilings or Velcroed to the walls to organize and save space (she grew up on boats in the northwest) It was beautiful ride yesterday - slowly down the mountain through Stratton Village where the folks in the Town offices took our pictures and scurried around making us coffee.. Ahhhhh... something hot to drink! We followed another river down the mountain, passing those quintessential Vermont backwoods camps - mostly red with white trim - and noticed incredible places where mudslides had taken slices of hillsides, where trees were hanging off the banks on the horizontal ... we passed a whole region of cairn rock sculptures where all passersby were welcome to add to the piles... upon arriving here we took the horses to a local stable and went and sat in the icy river deciding that given the weather report - Rain - that we'd make this place our base until Ann leaves on Saturday and I head out again on my own. We're going to do day trips from here and I'm going to figure out where to head next, call the Chamber of Commerce and see if I can find somewhere to put myself and horse if this weather continues... I don't mind riding in the rain, but sleeping day after day in wetness just isn't what I'm.....

(And that is where this description leaves off ...)o:)

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Here is Wendy's description of her trip from Jamaica through to Proctorsville:

After spending three days in Jamaica in the little octagonal house by Cobb Mountain Creek - more a river really - during which there were floods and endless thunderstorms, Jolie and I were finally able to resume our travels. (She spent her days at a very posh stable owned by a strikingly tall and robust German woman named Teeney Hamilton.) We headed up through Jamaica in the early morning fog, following the West River up to Hamilton Falls - a very dramatic spot with a 150' drop, where over the years a few very optimistic people have jumped in and died... I have been using the Vermont Gazetteer as my map on this trip, because it indicates dirt roads, class 4 roads and trails, and has proven very reliable - in fact often more reliable than the locals -though when we came out of the state park at the top of the falls the map was very confusing - so we headed in the wrong direction... until we came upon an immaculate farm and a very old and tiny man standing by the side of the road. He was so short and so still I nearly missed him - in fact I had to do a double take to be sure I was looking at a person. He couldn't hold his head up and was very hard of hearing, but when I yelled my questions at him he was able to tell me how to get to the trail I needed and where to make the necessary turns once in the forest. And he was correct! We headed up and over a mountain on the treacherously, muddy, steep and rocky trail in question, and made our way over to the next valley where we hit a road that could carry us north for a while.

Most of these roads are very deserted and a pleasure to ride upon - most too, in this part of the state are in the mountains and are not straight like they are through the flatter farmlands near Lake Champlain. So we do a lot of winding up and down hills and almost always next to a wonderful river or stream. Because of the copious rain, these are swollen and loud rivers, but it's a music which is soothing, and finding water for Jolie is very easy. She has taken to drinking out of puddles - something she wouldn't have done before this trip - but she's learned fast that if she's thirsty, she needs to drink what's available. She's learned to take care of herself really. If she's tired climbing a hill she'll pause for a bit in the shade and then carry on when she's ready. She is also quite adamant when it's time for a grass break, and I try to oblige her within reason. Some days however we'd never get anywhere if I let her stop as much as she'd like. She's not a horse with a huge work ethic,

but she has been fairly open hearted about the journey. One very helpful thing is that she doesn't care when we walk away from other horses, or barns. She seems to be happy to be on her way...

We ended our first day out of Jamaica at Andover, at the house of some friends of a friend. At dawn the next morning, as I was leaving, the man of the house followed me across the fields playing a hair-raising tune on his fiddle... He was striding through the tall grass wearing red suspenders... quite a brilliant start to what proved to be a difficult day - mostly because the weather was miserably hot, stagnant, and humid and stuck in a state of impending storm. All through the day people offered me shelter from what looked like imminent rains - which never developed - and it seemed as if we were progressing at about 1 mile an hour. Both Jolie and I would have been happy spending the afternoon snoozing under a tree, but we found ourselves in a busy area around Ludlow and it felt like we needed to get farther away from civilization... so we kept moving, until finally the storm we'd been expecting caught up with us on a little road near a couple of summer cottages. As it hit we caught sight of a man making for his garage and when he turned around he was surprised to find us right behind him! We squeezed in with his tractors and other machinery and waited while everything outside went haywire...branches falling, power knocked out, etc. While chatting with the owner of our shelter I was able to identify an odd animal I had spotted that morning. As we were following a wooded road an animal stepped out of the trees that looked from a distance like an awkward black German shepherd sized puppy. It had incredibly beautiful black fur and a fluffy tale, and when it turned to face me had ears and muzzle that resembled a large weasel. It was the famed Fisher Cat - a very ferocious creature that eats cats!

In any case the storm cleared things a bit and we set off on another trail that took us up and across some fabulous farms and down the other side to the longest stretch of tar road we've traveled on yet. However the road had no shoulder, was very busy and seemed to harbor every nutty driver around. Meanwhile I was not feeling well, Jolie was reaching new heights of crankiness, and it was getting late. As I stepped off of the road to let a particularly ferocious driver pass, I looked up and noticed a Bed and Breakfast Sign. "O.K. Jolie", I said, "we're splurging!"

The agreeable couple who owned the place set Jolie up at a farm close by and then invited me to have dinner with them... Well in the course of our conversation we discovered that the couple in question - Jim and Ellen Parrish - had been close friends with my husband's parents in Virginia Beach, Virginia!!!!!! How could this be? An impossible and random co-incidence! That night they took me for a drive around the region and we startled a healthy looking bear out in the road... The next morning as I was getting ready to pay for my extravagant splurge, Ellen refused to take any money saying "John and Dottie (my husband's parents) were such a huge help to me when my father died, that this is one way I can pay them back!! It's Fate you've come here" she said. Needless to say, I wept.

With their good wishes in my ears, I set off toward Woodstock - a place famous for its community of horse lovers and owners....

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(Added August 18th)

I rode into the Woodstock region on July 3 and was immediately impressed with its horse friendliness. Besides the very excellent trail system they have around those parts, in choice places along the road someone has stationed beautiful water troughs.

While Jolie and I rested beneath a tree in a very rich pasture, a fancy carriage drove by pulled by a pair of Oldenburgs, and as we made our way toward our night's destination we came upon a fellow in a cart driving his Morgan (John Greenall?). We chatted for a bit and his eyebrows flew up in his head when I told him where I was staying for the night.... A woman from the Vermont Horse Council had arranged for me to stay with someone named Steve Leninski, who I learned had quite a reputation. He's a Ukrainian fellow in his 70's - an avid polo player who decided that he wanted to make a polo field on the mountain behind his house - so he proceeded to dynamite the top off until it was flat enough to play on - this took a whole year! In any case he was a great character and a gracious host, who has permanent 'for sale' signs on everything inside and outside of the house....

(I met Wendy for the first time on the night of July 3rd a little after she'd settled her horse into the barn at the home of Steve Leninski and family up on Morgan Hill in South Woodstock. She'd just made her way up from Perkinsville.

On the morning of the 4th I met her with my Quarter Horse mare, Fria, at the South Woodstock firehouse.)



Wendy and Jolie coming off of Morgan Hill - July 4th



Wendy packing supplies

Wendy adjusts her packs as Gina tacks up





Jolie and Fria discuss the situation



Adjusting the sign (in anticipation of crossing state Route 4

On our way - July 4th



(We rode up Church Hill and down Peterkin Hill. We crossed the covered bridge in West Woodstock, made our way to the Cox District road and then too Grassy Lane over to Prosper. In Prosper the horses and Wendy were put up in the lovely barn at 'Down the Hill Farm'. That evening we enjoyed the festivities at the High School including the pies, fire spinning and fireworks. On the 5th we explored the trails on Mt. Tom pausing for a long perusal of the view over Woodstock.)



By the Pogue on Mt Tom - July 5

Wendy and Jolie on Mt Tom overlooking Woodstock - July 5



I stayed in the Woodstock area for five days, spending one night outside under the first clear skies in weeks, and one night in an incredibly outfitted barn and a few nights with Gina Lancaster who was my tour guide in the region. We rode up to the top of Mount Tom in the Marsh Billings Park, where horses are welcome and where Jolie had an unexpected attack of terror after staring down at the town below. Suddenly out of nowhere she wheeled around and took off with me down the trail. It was a good half mile before she settled down again. Was she in a rush to go shopping? Did she want to get her hair done? What?

(From there we made our way to the River Road then up to the Emmons's Cloudland Farm in Pomfret where our horses stayed the night. We also shopped there buying some yummy, natural Angus beef jerky produced right on the farm.)



Cloudland Farm - July 6

(The next day we made our way over to the west side of Pomfret. We rode up Hewitt Hill, following Windy Ridge road we made our way to Wild Apple road. From there we took lovely trails coming eventually to the top of a 1900 foot newly cleared hill where the view is almost 360 degrees!)

Snack break for the horses (Wendy is looking for strawberries) - July 6



(We made our way off the hill via trails to Lime Pond Road where Wendy and Jolie stayed two nights at Turkey Hollow Farm.

On Saturday the 8th we followed trails over to the Sayer Road, went down Lime Pond Road to Broad Brook Road. I escorted Wendy as far as East Barnard, she continued on to South Royalton to stay with Trish Polk on a farm up there.)

Wendy waves goodbye as she heads off down Broad Brook Road - July 8



Over the July 4th weekend we finally began to get a string of dry days, and so everywhere farmers set to work cutting hay (I learned that years ago July 4th was the traditional time to cut hay here - I guess before mechanization - now in a good year it's normal to get 3 cuts.) So the smell of grass was in the air and in every field there were wind rows or wagons being loaded with bales. It's a relief to see the hay piling up because we've all been worried that there would be no horse hay available this year. Corn is another matter. I've seen only one good field in all my traveling - most have scrawny plants or no plants at all - which is why they've declared a state of Emergency for the farmers here. The early rains just ruined everything.

After leaving Woodstock I rode through Pomfret to So Royalton, where a local newspaper (The Valley News) came and took photos of me tacking and packing up. From there to East Randolph to Williamstown, Williamstown to E. Montpelier where we're having a rest. Sunday we'll head toward Groton State Park on an old rail bed that is flat and easy going. I think we'll camp there for a few days because it's supposed to be a great place to ride.

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A short note by Wendy about Wendy's trip from East Barnard to East Montpelier

Here's a brief rundown of things since I left you. Jolie walked away from Fria with great ease, I'm happy to report, and I had a beautiful ride down to So. Royalton. On the way, a woman came roaring up in her car and pulled over next to me, got out and asked me what the heck I was doing. She (Kristin Calkins) said her husband saw me go by and told her she better come check me out. She's a freelance writer and is always looking for stories... In any case she called the Valley News and they came out early the next morning and took photos while I was getting ready to head out....

The very gracious and accommodating people I have stayed with since Pomfret include: Trish Polk - S. Royalton (who rode with me on the way to E. Randolph), Ann Siloway - E. Randolph, Brenda and Morris Lasell - Williamstown, and currently Jolie is resting in E. Montpelier at the home of Mary and Rich Tousignant. I'm giving her a few days off because she seemed pretty tired the day Brenda Lasell and I rode up to E. Montpelier. Highlights of the places I've ridden include the Floating Bridge in Brookfield, where Jolie just couldn't figure out what to do with her feet and just snorted and snorted at the water, Neighborly Farm in Randolph, where I bought great cheese and chocolate (two important food staples) and the amazing water-filled quarries and rock piles around Graniteville... I'm setting out again toward Groton State Park with the Lasells on Sunday. We'll ride the railroad bed and then Jolie and I will camp at New Discovery Park Sunday and Monday. From there, onward to Peacham!

I have spent a lot more time with people than I thought I would when I planned this trip. In fact one of the reasons why I wanted to go out by myself was to experience some deep quiet and solitude, to travel slowly and develop a partnership with my horse. However people have come out of the woodwork to participate and help and so I'm grateful for the goodness I've been shown. I'm really happy with the saddlebags, by the way. They're easy to put on and take off and feel like trusty friends. Jolie has no sores or back troubles I'm happy to report. She's a wide horse and I do think that helps. We're using a flexible tree saddle which has also served well.

I guess the last time I wrote, I was taking a break in E. Montpelier. From there I rode with two wonderful folks - Brenda and Morris Lasell over to Groton State Park - one of two campgrounds in Vermont that takes horses.



Bug and sun protection

These are pictures of Brenda and
Morris Lasell and me leaving
Mary
Tousignant's in E. Montpelier to
head out to Groton State Park....



The route was along a very flat and shady rail trail which carried us for about 20 miles high on the sides of the hills. The park was great except that the water was laced with uranium in the horse area... which was declared un-potable for humans but fine for horses. I didn't want Jolie to glow in the dark so I managed to get water from another well on the grounds. I camped for two days there and the first night I realized that it was obvious to others that I was alone. When you're tucked back in a field somewhere it's easy to make yourself invisible but in an organized campground it's not. So that first night I was a little restless and alert because there was a group of men cruising around on Harley's and though I don't want to make any judgments, there were 3 of them and 1 of me.... The next night I felt pretty comfortable and settled down for a good sleep when a couple drove in and took the campsite next to mine. They lit a roaring fire and because the crackling sounds and the smell of the smoke were soothing, I began to slip off into a beautiful dreamlike state. Suddenly though, I began to hear some fairly questionable sighs and rumblings and realized that my neighbors were "starting in" - so to speak - and soon they began to make such an expressive racket that I began to worry about the children in the campground. This went on for hours, very loudly. It was hilarious in a way - except that I'm sure I was not the only one in the place who couldn't get to sleep. I figured that when the whole thing ended there'd finally be some quiet, but no - the fellow began to talk in a very deep and booming voice - and so after covering my ears with as much clothing and baggage as I could find, tossing and turning, and grinding my teeth, I decided I'd had it. The moon was still up - no signs of dawn, no birdsong. I caught Jolie, packed up and rode away... which turned out to be a bad idea, because I missed a crucial turn and ended up riding a good 10 miles out of my way... and as dawn came the first of the day's storms came with it. There were 4 that day. One came with a particularly violent tornado-like wind that blew the roof off a building in Barnet - the next town over. I hid out in a dairy shed during that one, talking to the drenched farmer and his wife who had been trying to get their hay in before the deluge.... As the next one hit I was riding by a tidy farm that had a ranch gate over the entrance - so I made for the barn and fell asleep in the hay while Jolie snoozed and the rain clattered on the tin roof. Later the owner showed up and we had a nice chat about his dreams of riding from Maine to the Dakotas... sounds like a good idea to me.... I ended that day quite late on a beautiful tidy hill farm in Danville with views of the White Mountains in New Hampshire.

Jolie had two behavior changes on this trip: She used to hate fly spray and would get wildly alarmed when I sprayed her legs or any part of her body really. But one day she was attacked by flies so badly - we were in dairy country and cows seem to generate zillions of the face fly variety - that she suddenly understood why I was spraying her - it was stunning to watch as she seemed to say to herself "O.K. now I get it" and then she suddenly relaxed and stood still. And so now she seems to breathe a sigh of relief when I appear with my spray bottle.

The other behavior was a surprise and also lucky. I had let her loose in a field one morning, something spooked her and she took off running toward the road. There was nothing I could do but call her and, amazingly, she turned around and came galloping back to me. This is a horse that never came when called - unless food was involved... Even though we have encountered nine million of them, large rocks still make her suspicious. Crouching lions, I suppose. I'm not sure if she'll ever get over that one.

My trip from Danville took me up through the beautiful Northeast Kingdom hill farms and forests north to the St. Johnsbury/Lyndonville area. Then on to Sheffield, Barton, Albany, Lowell, Westfield, Montgomery, Bakersfield, E. Fairfield and Fletcher - where the trip has paused temporarily.

I encountered wonderful people and stayed on some extraordinary farms - big ones for the East - 800 acres, 650 acres - high green pastures, pine trees and mountain ridges. The Ridges are controversial in the Kingdom because there's a plan to put several large industrial wind farms on some of them. On first hearing, wind sounds benign enough, but these projects are slated to place miles of 450' towers with red lights on top along the most beautiful mountains in the state. They'll be visible for miles in all directions. When I learned that changing 5 light bulbs (*for the twisty neon type*) in every home would save what they would generate in a year, and that the only benefits to the locals are revenues that don't amount to much, comparatively, and they don't get the benefits of the energy.... Well you can imagine where I've landed on the issue. It seems to me that Industrial Wind should be located in windy industrial places... not in beautiful rural regions...

I have to say Serendipity continued to follow me on my journey. One very rainy day I found myself in Sheffield thinking it would be great to find a roof for the night. Some folks told me of a farm up the mountain that breeds Walking Horses. So, up the mountain we went, the fog falling behind us into the valley below. It seemed like we rode forever - it always seems like that when it's pouring however - and finally we came around a corner to find a very well cared for, well built horse operation. We ambled up the driveway, to find the two owners, Tim and Ann Leverette, sitting on their porch, and when I told them what I was up to, they invited me in, put Jolie in a luxurious stall - after a 'ventilin' bath of course - and let me loose in their shower and then led me to their laundry room. The result: clean pants - sort of... Later, when we began to talk of origins, Ann mentioned she'd sold a horse to a fellow over in Shelburne - where we began the journey. Not only did I know the fellow but he had actually given me Tim and Ann's address should I get to Sheffield. I had forgotten the paper with their name, and I ended up in Sheffield only because the roads led me there.... I spent a few days at the farm and got the opportunity to ride one of their fabulous horses. I'd never ridden a Walker before and it was like getting on a Ferrari after riding a Mack truck (sorry Jolie). The ground covering possibilities are astonishing...

It was from the Leverettes that I first learned about the aforementioned Wind Project and as I rode I heard more and more about it, because everyone in the region is going to be affected. The Nelson Farm in the Albany / Lowell region is another extraordinary spot just below the ridgeline of the Lowell Mountains - where more windmills are planned. Their farm is on the Bailey - Hazen trail, an old road built during the revolution - It was planned to run all the way to Canada but the builders stopped at Hazen's notch because of fears of Indian Ambush and also with the realization that if they opened a road to Canada it would make it easier for the enemy to attack from the north...

Don and Shirley Nelson milked cows for 30 years and raised their children on the farm... Don mentioned that he didn't love milking but that he did love animals. He told stories about his "boys" - raccoons he raised, and led me out to the barn to watch as he stroked and fed a wild one who comes in for his supper at night. He also told stories of a young deer a friend had asked him to keep during hunting season. I guess it was a fawn whose mother had died, and who had been raised with cows. After hunting season ended they let the deer out of the barn and he began to wander off. So Don and Shirley put bread and other deer-loving snacks in the back of the car and followed him until he noticed they had food - Then they opened the hatchback and he jumped in! They said he rode between them in the car like a dog.... eventually I guess the game warden came for him because he was bothering fisherman, and tangling their lines... and so he vanished.

I'm at home now, spending some time with my family and theoretically waiting for the weather to cool off before I head out to finish my journey. The thing is it's a perfect riding temperature right

now - which is unusual for August as we know - and it's hard to not just get up early in the morning, pack up and head out again. Horse travel gets into your blood and it's difficult to stop once you and your horse establish a rhythm. Jolie looks at me expectantly these days, and though I'm riding her hard everyday to keep her in shape, I think she might be missing the road as well.

That's it for now. If I haven't said it before, I would just like to say that during this trip it was wonderful to be out of touch with the rather grim news of the world, and to experience instead the generosity and goodness of people. I would like to thank everyone who helped me on my way. It made the journey into something very special, and connected me to people I would never have had the opportunity to meet.

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Here's a brief rundown of the rest of my trip from Nelson's farm to Fletcher:

Let's see, I left the Nelson farm by heading up the Bailey Hazen Trail. It was a beautiful climb over a mountain that delivered spectacular views from the open fields we passed. Some of the trail was rough going for a horse, because in places it was ledge and I was glad we had borium on Jolie's shoes because it was slippery. That particular stretch of the trail joined the Catamount trail and as I was nearing the end of the leg, I was met by a succession of large yellow signs:

"HUNGRY?"

"Yes" I said to myself. "Always. Maybe there's a snack bar at the bottom of the hill.." When you're out on a trip like this you get to thinking about food a lot, I notice. At times I craved normal things like coffee or a beautiful cup of Tea, but then Poached Fish would pop into my head.... something I rarely eat... I could imagine it on the plate with parsley and lemon wedges and asparagus.. Hmmmm.

The next sign:

"COLD?"

Definitely not. Jolie and I were steaming hot. We left the forest soon after we saw that sign and had one of the hottest rides of the trip, mostly because we were out on open roads, where the shade was intermittent. As we came out of the Bailey Hazen trail a beautiful view of the mountains stretched out in front of us. Jay Peak to the northwest and abrupt Chinese looking pointy peaks to the northeast. I could see into Canada where the land flattened out beyond Vermont...

By the end of that day we found ourselves on a high hill farm in Westfield, owned by a friend, Dan Backus. On the way we ran into Cindy Cooke on the tiny stretch of route 100 we had to traverse. She and her husband just happened to be passing in their truck...

Once again Jolie had two loose shoes in the front, and when I got up to Westfield we called a farrier and once again he came right away! Wow, I think everyone who needs a farrier in a hurry should say they're riding on a long trip.. In any case he ended up replacing her back shoes - they were worn to a sliver. He reset the fronts because with the Borium they just didn't wear out...

Poor Jolie was so tired during the shoeing she nearly fell down twice and in between did a lot of snoring with her head nearly on the ground.. Because she's a black horse, the heat really knocked her out...

I spent two nights in Westfield sleeping in a tiny cabin on a pond, where the bullfrogs were exceptionally loud. In the night the coyotes cavorted...

From the farm in Westfield I headed onto a snowmobile trail which took me over a ridge and down to the Notch Road (more Bailey Hazen) to Montgomery. On the way there I met my friend Ann minus her horse (who had ridden over the Kelly Stand with me early in the trip). Her daughter dropped her

off with food and water and cups of coffee and we decided we'd walk to our night's destination together.

"I have a short-cut ", she said. "It will cut off miles for you..." I should have taken that optimistic statement as a sign to BEWARE... for the shortcuts in my past had proven to be just the opposite.... We headed up a logging road and proceeded to walk... and walk.... and walk... We were supposed to make sure we took a particular right turn, and if we missed it to watch out because the guy at the end of the road might shoot us! Finally we came upon a logger who told us that yes indeed we had missed the turn, so back we went, walking and walking (Jolie was giving me a funny look by this time) and found the turn and proceeded to walk up the next road which also required an about face.... needless to say we walked for about 4 hours before we finally arrived at the big pasture where Jolie spent the night. When I turned her loose she rolled her eyes at me and disappeared into the woods...

From Montgomery I road over the somewhat spooky Enosburg mountain down into Cold Hollow, which also felt a little odd. Perhaps it was the vultures circling the high pastures. A Farmer told me in passing that one of his cows had died up there... Cold Hollow was the beginning of fly country, which followed me to E. Fairfield and down to Fletcher. Nasty flies that seemed prepared to eat Jolie alive. Horrible things.

The day I rode from Cold Hollow to E. Fairfield was weather-wise the best day of the summer. One of those brilliant and cool days with intense blue skies and big fat clouds. Everything sparkled, all the colors rich and deep. The distances clear and sharp.

The region around Fairfield is sugaring country I learned. Farms with 20,000 taps... Yikes. Everyone was haying or manure spreading, late into the night.

In far fields I could see headlights as they maneuvered around picking up hay. I could see fields in the distance because I was once again back in the Champlain valley, the kind of land I passed through at the beginning of my journey. Almost home.

But I decided to stop in Fletcher the next day, because as I mentioned earlier, the heat and flies were fairly unbearable, and August was coming soon.

If I could have seen into the future I would have continued riding, for this August turned out to be an extraordinarily cool month, more like September than the soporific humidity we are usually prey to....

As soon as I returned home I began to study the map again trying to figure out a good route back to Shelburne. It's impossible to do it on unpaved roads and it's such a congested area I may just skip it... Instead I'm thinking I will trailer down to the Benson area and try an alternate route to Manchester via Middletown Springs, Tinmouth, Danby, Dorset. The Wells/ Manchester run was all on route 30. Not good for riding.



In Fletcher

I got a lot of good experience on this ride and am now beginning to plan a trip into and across Canada.

If anyone out there is interested in such an adventure please contact me and we can talk about it.

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