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War of the Woods - Sharing trails and tales

By Justin Beddall (Rob Newell photo)

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By Justin Beddall
 Staff Reporter

The family who rides together stays together. Just ask the Bants, a West Vancouver family whose Dodge Caravan is equipped with enough bike racks — one roof rack and one bumper rack — to carry at least five bikes at once.

Back in the late 1990s, Peter Bant, now 48, took his two sons, Trevor, 17, and Graeme, 15, mountain biking on the BLT trail on Cypress Mountain in West Vancouver.

“They slugged up that and we did a couple of downhill runs. We kept finding new trails,” Peter recalled. “It grew from there.”

Before long, father and sons were loading up the minivan and driving to venues on the Island and throughout the interior of British Columbia to participate in B.C. Cup mountain biking events.

“I started down-hilling and then we switched over to cross-country. And then they got more involved. I can’t keep up anymore. All summers were spent traveling the interior — the whole family would go — all five of us with bikes and gear,” Peter recalled, adding that his wife, Jane, and daughter Heather also came on the road trips.

Said Trevor: “We all got mountain bikes and started riding. We began riding more and more. There was a competition between me and my brother and me and my dad.”

Since then, the two boys have become bike-crazy.

“As the kids got older they started racing downhill. It’s kind of taken over our lives ever since. They’ve got a full 12-month program,” Peter said.

When Trevor started attending West Vancouver’s Rockridge secondary in Grade 8, Peter took over the

Aldergrove Star

Rockridge high school mountain bike team and has been coaching the team ever since.

The kids, meanwhile, who are now training with local mountain bike legend Lesley Tomlinson, are competing in B.C. Cup, Canada Cup and national events all summer. They are also competing in road racing events.

Recently, the father and sons drove down to the Sea Otter event in Monterey, California. There, Graeme won the short-track cross-country event, while Trevor, now sponsored by Rocky Mountain, was forced to dismount because of sickness.

"After an 18-hour drive to California we spent a lot of time together," Peter said of the bike-bonding time on the road.

Graeme was especially pleased with his strong finish.

"That was important to me. It's a big event. It's the best riders from Canada and the U.S."

As mountain biking has gained more popularity, Trevor, who has placed third overall in the B.C. Cup points standings in 2003 and 2004, and Graeme are among a new generation of local athletes who no longer grow up dreaming of playing in the National Hockey League or becoming a pro snowboarder. Nowadays, young mountain bikers can dream of one day testing their pedal mettle at the Summer Olympics.

"That's the only sport [they participate in]. It's an Olympic sport, so you don't know where it will take them," Peter said.

Graeme, who is sponsored by Sigoi, Giant Cycles and Maxis, is also interested in a road racing career. "I'd like to get on a road racing team and move to Europe."

Later this month, Peter and sons will travel to a Canada Cup mountain biking event in Ontario. The boys, considered to be among the up-and-coming riders from the Shore, both compete in the "expert" division.

After competing in Ontario, the family will move on to the National Mountain Bike Series in Quebec.

Peter says the opportunity to ride and train on the North Shore has given his boys an edge when it comes to racing on pavement and dirt.

"If you can ride the North Shore stuff you can ride anything — especially the technical stuff."

Trevor agreed. "We can definitely ride anything in a race because we started riding on the toughest trails [in the world]."

Peter, Graeme and Trevor aren't the only mountain bikers in the Bant family.

Mother Jane competed in an enduro race with her

husband two years ago in Salmon Arm, B.C. Her two sons also take her to The Griffin trail on Fromme Mountain, the same route that hosted the West Vancouver high school race this year.

Peter has hopes his daughter Heather, who will attend Rockridge next year, will start competing in high school mountain bike racing. "I hope to get her on the Rockridge team."

Jane said she enjoyed the bike-bonding time she experienced riding on the Shore with her two sons.

"They'd have to ride at mommy pace and Peter would also take me," said Jane, who has also attended some women's only biking classes.

She believes that mountain biking is a great family activity.

"When they were younger and starting to ride they would go with Peter and it was a great family bonding time. Mountain biking is a tremendous sport for families to get into when their kids are young."

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