

WEDNESDAY EDITION:

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WEATHER



TOMORROW

Sunny

High 24°C

DETAILS PAGE B7

The Standard

SPORTS Vineland golfer elder statesman of Canadian T

ST. CATHARINES-NIAGARA

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'I have this adventurous streak'

By **TIFFANY MAYER**
Standard Staff

Albert Martz didn't cycle across Canada for a cause.

He wasn't trying to raise money, deliver a message or change the world.

The 70-year-old semi-retired St. Catharines man didn't really do it for any

reason except maybe to prove to himself that he could.

And he did.

For 54 days this summer — 41 of those were actually spent pedalling as many as 11 hours a day — Martz travelled 6,877 kilometres from Vancouver to Halifax because that's just the type

of guy he is. "It's in my nature. I have this adventurous streak," the German-born Martz said. "I like challenges and that was a challenge."

A challenge that he almost didn't meet.

By the time Martz hit Rainy River in northern Ontario, his left knee gave out. Martz, who had just spent 11 days in

Winnipeg for a wedding, was ready to call his family to come pick him up and use a different kind of pedal power to get him home.

But he found a doctor who gave him a cortisone shot and the sage advice to take it easy for a couple days.

Please see Cyclist page A10

Cyclist

CONTINUED FROM PAGE A1

"That healed up and I was on my way," Martz said.

On his way into some of the toughest terrain he'd face on his journey. Travelling through the Rockies was almost like being on cruise control compared to navigating the hilly landscape of northern Ontario. "You go up and up and up for kilometres and then you go down — that's not so bad — but then you go up again," he said.

It wasn't exactly smooth pedalling after leaving the Canadian Shield.

Martz got a ticket in Quebec for walking his bike across a bridge that was under construction. Farther down the road, he was squeezed off the asphalt by a gravel truck — an event that left him "really shook up."

Still, "the good outweigh the bad," Martz said.

"I'm a believer in God and I think there was a guardian angel and lots of prayers," he said.

Some of those positive thoughts came from Elizabeth, Martz's wife who stayed behind in St. Catharines, charting his daily progress on a map.

"I'm happy for him and I'm thankful to the Lord because I did lots of praying for him," Elizabeth said Tuesday, a week after having her husband home.

When he finally arrived in Halifax earlier this month after departing June

21, Martz was elated. And tired.

He took a break from cycling for four days, recuperating in a Halifax hotel before returning to St. Catharines Aug. 16 and to his regular routine of morning bike rides through the city.

This isn't the first time Martz has taken to the road on two wheels powered only by himself. In 1992, one year after taking up cycling, he traversed the U.S., pedalling from California to Florida in 27 days.

"I think there was a guardian angel and lots of prayers."

Albert Martz

"I said if I live (in Canada), why not do this in my own country?" said Martz, who ran a heating and cooling business.

For the next 14 years, the idea brewed, until finally Elizabeth reminded him he'd better get going before the brakes were put on his plans for good.

"That was a dream he had for a long time and then it was, 'Well, if you're this age, you might as well do it.' When you're 70, you never know what's going to happen a year from now," Elizabeth said.

Now that Canada's under his fanny pack, Martz isn't ready to put the kickstand down for good.

"Some of (my siblings) younger than me ... they say, 'What do you want to do next?'" Martz said. "How about Europe?"