

Cutting spreads message in cross-Canada trek

By SUSAN LUNDY
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A Salt Spring woman who travelled across Canada spreading the word about global warming has returned home invigorated and enthused.

"It was the high point of my life," says 71-year-old Dorothy Cutting. "And it's just possible that I made a little difference."

Cutting climbed into her new hybrid (gas and electric-powered) Honda on September 9 with her German shepherd Arta and headed east for Ottawa, where she attended a press conference and met with Robert Hunter, author of the book 2030: Confronting Thermageddon in Our Lifetime.

Cutting's life changed when she read Hunter's book last summer, and since then she has spent a small fortune purchasing copies of the book and handing them out.

In his book, Hunter predicts that by the year 2030, climate changes on Earth will be irreversible and the consequences devastating.

He shows the effects of global warming and the role humans play in it, but also claims that changed lifestyles now could reverse the trend.

Wanting to do "more" to spread the word, Cutting contacted the Sierra Club of Canada and offered to donate enough money to buy books for every Canadian MP.

Then, to put words into practise, she purchased a hybrid Honda to drive across Canada to a Sierra Club press conference with Hunter in Ottawa.



Dorothy Cutting, Arta, and the famous hybrid Honda.

Driftwood file photo

"All we have to do is get people to read the book," she says.

The two-week journey became a media event with Cutting stopping in myriad Canadian towns and cities along the way, giving interviews for television, radio and print media.

In Alberta, she took a copy of Hunter's book to premier Ralph Klein, who is opposed to the Kyoto Protocol, which Cutting believes is one step towards slowing down the effects of global warming.

Followed by a crush of television cameras and Sierra Club members, Cutting met Klein's administrative assistant in the legislature, where she handed over the book.

"I inscribed it presumptuously," Cutting laughs. "I said it was from the grandmothers of Canada, and

asked him to read the first 68 pages."

Cutting received a short thank-you letter from Klein and several dozen other beneficiaries of the 2030 book.

In Ottawa, Cutting met with MP David Anderson.

"We were besieged by media," she recalls, adding that she was a bit daunted when called upon to speak in French as

well as English.

After her cross-country journey, Cutting was "so tired she couldn't tell east from west."

She recovered in Toronto where she met with Hunter's publishers and then stayed for three days with Hunter

and his wife and daughter.

She was amused by the dichotomy between Hunter's ingenuousness and his apparent inability to organize himself.

"He looked at my lap-top computer and saw how organized my desktop was, and asked if he could do that on his (computer)," Cutting says. "But his mind is so brilliant, I didn't want to mess with it, and I never did show him how to do 'favourites' and become more orderly."

Later, as she listened to Hunter on a talk show, she was stunned by his ability to pull out facts and figures, seemingly off the top of his head.

"He is absolutely brilliant."

The two have forged a friendship and Cutting has encouraged Hunter to join her in promoting his book in the United States — a tour she hopes will include a stop on Salt Spring.

Cutting feels her trip has upped the awareness of issues surrounding global warming right across the country.

"There were just so many

articles written in hometown newspapers, and radio and television."

Called to participate in a CBC Radio interview in Winnipeg, Cutting was surprised to discover the topic was not global warming.

"I thought I'd be talking as usual about the book, but it turned out to be a car show and they wanted to hear about my hybrid car."

The hybrid vehicle drew lots of attention everywhere she went — one Ottawa pedestrian shouted, "Hey hybrid, you rock!" — and Cutting got used to popping the hood for crowds of spectators.

"By the time they left, they knew a lot about global warming," she added with a smile.

Cutting was also on the receiving end of learning. She discovered the energizing power of love and felt herself cresting on the wave of a new kind of environmental movement.

"When I got my idea for my 'pilgrimage' across Canada, I immediately felt greatly energized," Cutting recalls.

That energy, she added,

came from love in its "broadest and most powerful sense."

"In reading 2030, I felt the love Hunter has for all humanity, and the same love flowed through me . . . all during my trip. And I think that people I met knew what I was feeling . . . And so they loved me back. They smiled at me with a light in their eyes I've never seen. It was beautiful, and I feel humbled and deeply grateful to have experienced this."

She made life-long friends on her journey.

Cutting also noted how the environmental movement has changed since the 1960s and '70s, when most of those she worked with were "wilderness oriented."

But on her trip across Canada, she discovered that the majority of environmentalists were concerned with the whole planet.

"They understand how climate change, wilderness preservation, human health and the globalization of the economy are all tightly linked."

And thanks to Cutting, more Canadians than ever are now aware of that inter-connection.

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