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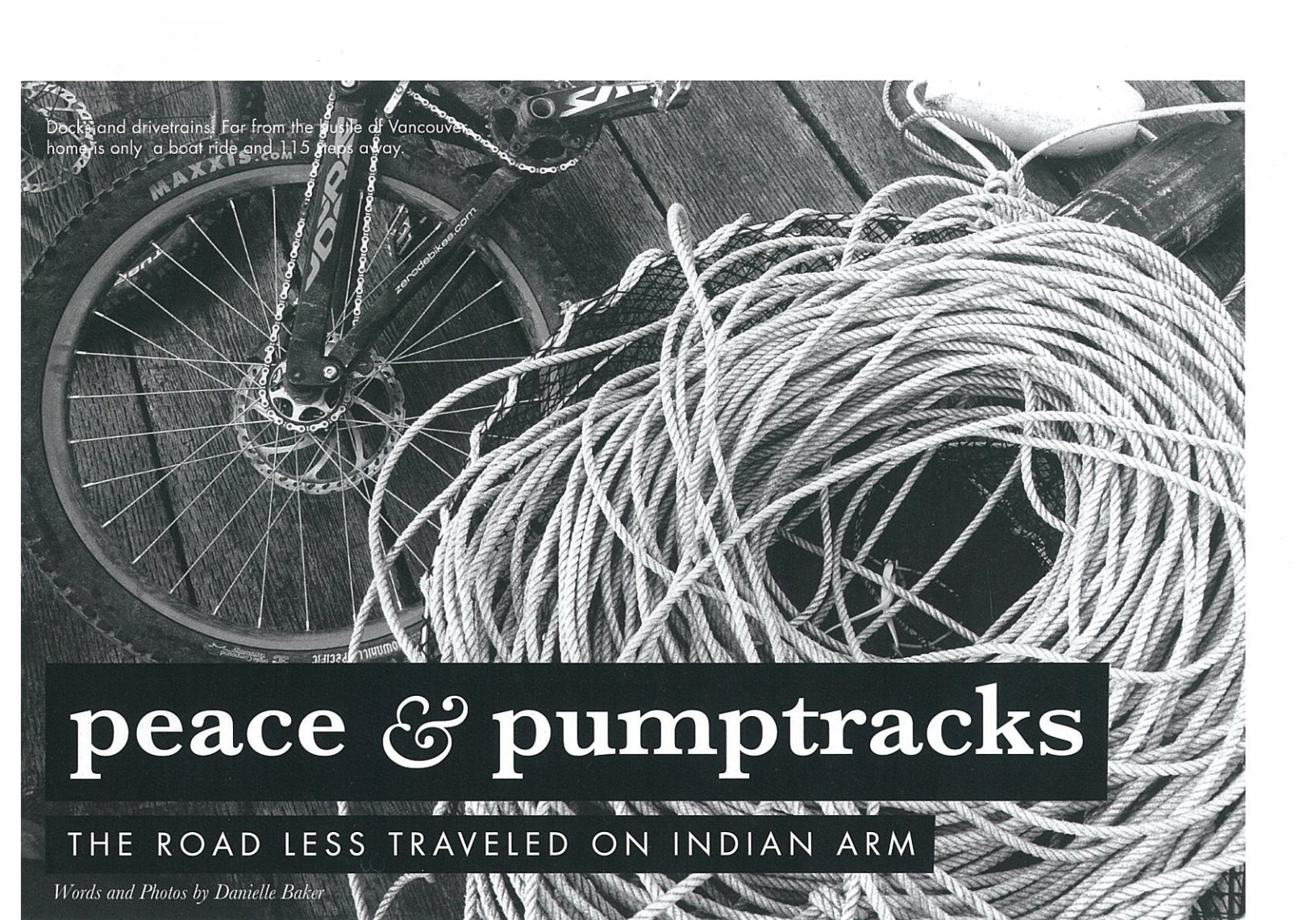
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A black and white photograph showing a close-up of a bicycle wheel on the left, with a large, thick coil of rope on the right. The background is a wooden deck. The bicycle has 'MAXXIS.COM' on the tire and 'zenobikes.com' on the frame. A small white buoy is visible in the upper right corner.

Docks and drivetrains: Far from the bustle of Vancouver, home is only a boat ride and 115 steps away.

peace & pumptracks

THE ROAD LESS TRAVELED ON INDIAN ARM

Words and Photos by Danielle Baker

Thirty-four years ago my parents left the city behind and moved to a boat access only property on the west coast of Vancouver Island. Our house had no roof, no electricity and a duck in the bathtub. Everyone thought they were crazy, but to this day it was the best decision they ever made.

When my friends, Phil and Liette Mowatt, did the exact same thing this year I not only felt nostalgic, but also overwhelmingly proud just knowing that someone in our generation still has that drive for adventure and an appreciation for defining success on their own terms. Despite the constant streaming of a societal dogma that is driven by keeping up with the Jones', taking the road less travelled is still just as rewarding as it was all those decades ago. And more importantly, it is still possible.

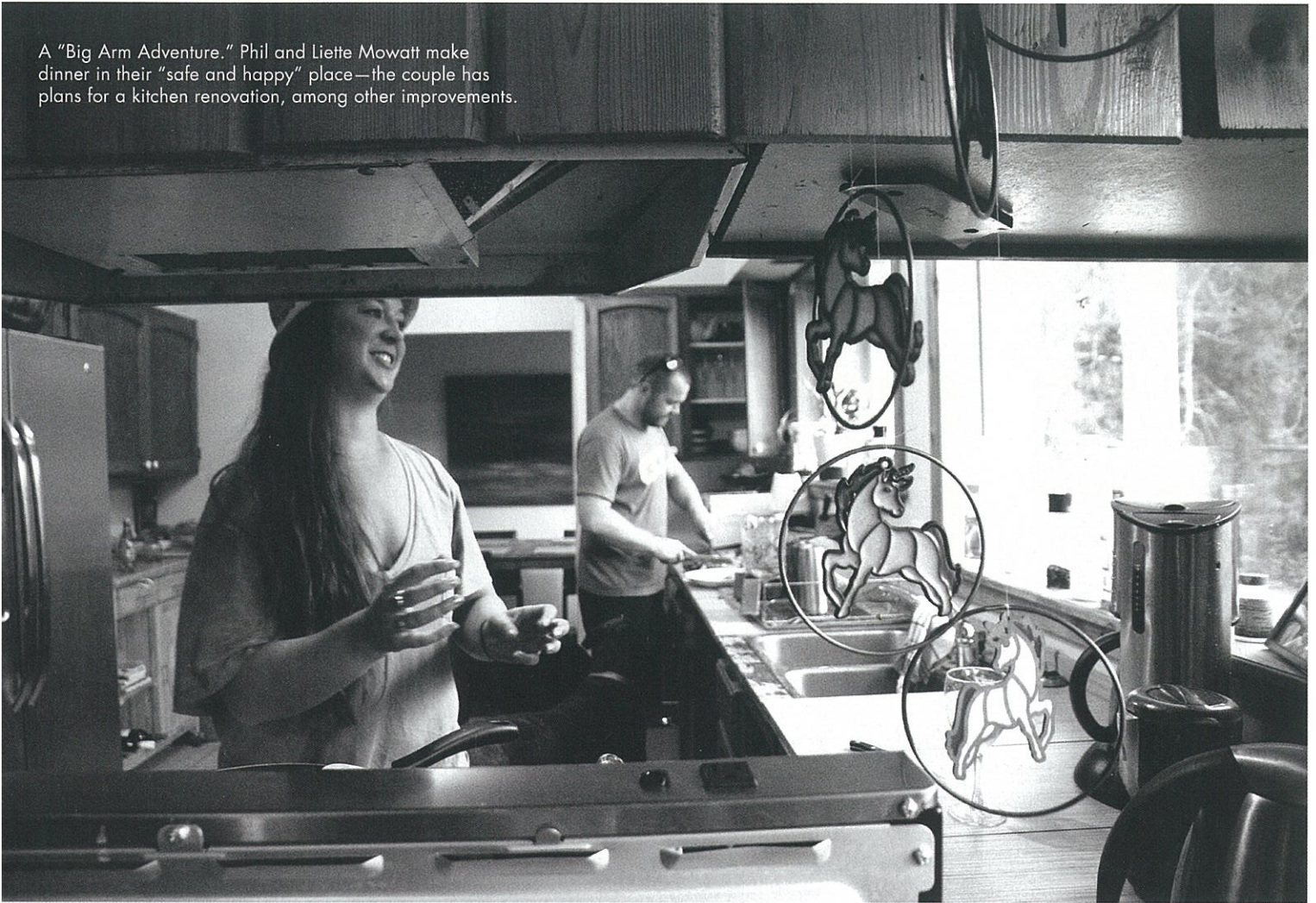
As the cofounder of CCN, a cycling specific online registration company, Phil has devoted his heart and soul—and countless hours—to the development of the business, growing it from his living room to a 14-employee office. But, inevitably, the necessary 18-hour-plus days and 7-day weeks eventually took its toll. Phil developed stress-induced psori-

asis, and he had to make a choice: treat the symptoms with constant UV sessions or make a lifestyle change.

Eight years ago Phil fell in love with Liette over a life-threatening trampoline accident, “I severed my ulna and nicked an artery, and she stopped the pulsing blood when the fire-fighters refused to touch me,” he says.

It was Liette who introduced Phil to the idea of living ‘off the grid’. Raised on Indian Arm, a 12-mile fjord extending north from Burrard Inlet with no road access, it was Liette who introduced Phil to the idea of living “off the grid” and returning to her home town. Not that she was thrilled with the idea; as a teenager, Liette moved into the city as the charm of such isolation wore off, and even years later it

A "Big Arm Adventure." Phil and Liette Mowatt make dinner in their "safe and happy" place—the couple has plans for a kitchen renovation, among other improvements.



took convincing for her to move back. But with damage caused by Phil's stress, she acquiesced. "She agrees with me now that it's the best thing we have done," he says.

In order to make the move an affordable reality, Phil and Liette had to take on a project home, doing most the work themselves. Previously the house had been filled with a steady stream of transients who left behind everything from needles and grow-op supplies to bags of moldy clothes and garbage, and it's taken two hard months for the couple just to make it a "safe and happy" place for them to be. They have installed a new ramp to the dock, recycled over a half-ton of scrap metal and removed four boat carcasses from the front yard. "It doesn't feel like work though," Phil says. "I am really enjoying doing all of it."

It's with this trash, however, that the biking comes in. The only "keeper" they pulled from the piles of detritus was an excavator, which Phil plans to use to build a nearly 1,700-foot, dual slalom-style pump track, connecting the waterfall behind the house with the front yard. "We really want this place to be as nice as it possibly can be with the limited resources we have," Phil says. "We have already done a lot with very little."

Along with the pump track, Phil and Liette have plans for new decks, a kitchen renovation, a hot tub, and two llamas, for which they traded a case of PBR. This winter Phil plans to buy a trials bike, using it to explore the treed area behind the house for trail-building potential, eventually linking the house to North Vancouver—by bike of course.

"Phil and Liette's Big Arm Adventure," as they have dubbed it, has vastly improved Phil's work-to-life balance. "I used to live 108 steps from the office," he says. "Now it's 115 steps just to the boat."

Visitors are always welcome, but there are rules. "Having high-speed satellite internet was a mandate of living here because I have to be able to work from home, but we don't give the password to guests," Phil says. When asked, the couple's standard response is: "If you want to take pictures, post them later. If you want to talk to someone, find someone here to talk to. If you want to know something, go to the bookcase."

And if you want the same fast-paced distraction that so commonly—and constantly—fills the outside world of social media, status updates and email chains...well, then get on your bike. 🚲