

The Long and Winding Road

62 Gay, Lesbian Cyclists
Raise \$33,000 to Fight AIDS



Pedaling for Pride '85. Vanguard of 62 cyclists rolls down Fell Street at the Panhandle early Saturday morning on first leg of arduous 100-mile journey to Russian River. One-third of the cyclists were women. (Photo: Rink)

57 Complete Run From City to River

by Brian Jones

ON STATE HWY. 1 NEAR BODEGA BAY — It has come down to this, 83 miles north of the Castro Theater. Can Gene make it? Should we let him try? The 64-year-old retired Hayward school teacher had already pushed himself farther than he ever had before: 83 miles, pumping up Mount Tam, around the hairpin curves near Stinson Beach, up the long, long hill near Valley Ford. He had started with the pack at Castro Street at 7:33 that morning. Now it was 5:30, ten hours later, and Gene was wobbling. Except for Gene, the cyclists were already at the Russian River, or nearly there.

Could Gene make it? Would we let him try?

We had a conference there on the side of the road, kelly green pastures behind us, the blarney and slate-grey Pacific in front

Cyclists Pedal for Charity

(Continued from page 1)

Two riders had already called it quits here at mile 83. The rear sweep driver had instructions to pull any stragglers off the road at dusk. With low dark clouds overhead, light was fading fast.

"How do you feel, Gene?" the driver asked.

"Fine. Fine," Gene said, nodding his head.

"Think you can make it? Want to keep going?"

Gene smiled, his head still nodding. Beads of sweat rolled down the sides of his face. The man looked delirious.

"Go for it then."

The light faded. Gene kept pedaling. He slowed to 12 miles an hour, even on the flat road skirting the Russian River. Near the end, the driver following Gene blocked the lane. He trained his headlights on Gene, so overtaking motorists wouldn't end the day's effort with a disaster.

At 7:01 p.m.—11 hours, 28 minutes and 100 miles from the start—Gene Howard coasted into the parking lot of Molly Brown's outside Guerneville. Horns honked, lights flashed, more than a hundred people cheered, jumping up and down. Gene dismounted, more wobbly than ever, and nodded and smiled.

"It's called your Personal Best," cyclist B.J. Irwin had told me earlier in the day.

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Their Personal Best: That's what 62 cyclists grinded out on Saturday, April 6. That's what dozens of volunteers gave, what dozens of sponsors contributed, what hundreds of donors pledged. It was the first-ever Lesbian and Gay bike-a-thon from San Francisco to the Russian River. Betting is, it won't be the last.

And it was an unqualified success. By day's end, pledges topping \$33,000 had been earned by the cyclists for benefit of the San Francisco AIDS Foundation.

I didn't believe it could be done, and I wasn't alone. Now that I've seen it with my own eyes I have to believe it. As a Sunday cyclist who day-trips

from the city to Sausalito or Larkspur, I couldn't conceive of pumping over the Marin Headlands, along the cliffs on the coast, and all the way to Guerneville in just one day.

The leader did it in 5 hours, 55 minutes. It is said he did not stop pedaling from the time he left Castro Street. In keeping with the spirit of the event—a bike-a-thon, not a race—nobody made a big deal out of who placed first, second and so on. In fact, I never learned who the leader was; only that he averaged just under 17 miles an hour on this rigorous route.

More typical of those who were toward the head of the pack was Dr. Bob Bolan, a member of the AIDS Foundation Board. Bob Bolan has the stature of a jockey and the speed of a racehorse. Bolan had an "on board computer." These gadgets are comprised of a wheel-mounted magnet paired with a frame-mounted sensor. A micro-computer in the middle of the handlebars counts the wheel rotations against a clock. The resulting data is everything you ever wanted to know about a bike ride.

Bolan left the city with the pack at 7:33 a.m. and arrived at the Russian River at 2:04. Elapsed time: 6 hours, 28 minutes. Average speed: 16.9 miles per hour. Top speed: 40.7 miles per hour. That's right: 40.7 miles an hour. That must have been coming down out of the Marin headlands. Can you imagine racing downhill toward the cliffs at the edge of the Pacific at 40.7 miles an hour? He also got a flat tire—10 minutes after he parked at Molly Brown's.

Of the 62 riders who started at the Castro (see adjacent list), 57 completed the course. Most, but not all, of the cyclists were members of Different Spokes bicycle club. About one-third of the riders were women.

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"They thought I was crazy. I know they didn't take it seriously," said Ricky Johnson. I was talking to Ricky as we drove back to the city on Sunday night. Johnson wasn't a cyclist and he had never organized anything big before. So, several months ago, the AIDS Founda-

tion didn't know what to think when Ricky Johnson said he would organize a bike-a-thon to raise money for the fight against AIDS.

Ken Jones, the foundation's volunteer coordinator, did what all good coordinators would do: He told Ricky Johnson to organize the whole thing and get back to him. To everyone's surprise, that's just what Ricky did.

"How long did it actually take to put together?" I asked.

"Oh, about six weeks," Johnson said. Six weeks! And the bike-a-thon came off more smoothly than many an event I have seen organized by people who have been around for years. At the bottom line was the \$33,000 committed in pledges. If those pledges are made good, Ricky Johnson's first foray into fundraising will be among the year's top efforts.

The event was meant to be. That's the only explanation. At every turn, things went right. Businesses, community groups and individuals jumped into the middle of things—often at the last minute—and no needs went unmet. Every time a need was identified, there was somebody there offering the matching resource.

For example: Scenic Hyway Tours, the bus company well known to local Lesbian and Gay groups, pitched in 12 buses. That ain't cheap. Twelve drivers all donated their day's work for free. From the mineral water to the toilets, community groups and businesses got behind the cyclists (see adjacent list).

Biggest contributors were, of course, the Different Spokes bike club and individual cyclists. They recruited the pledges and pumped the miles to put behind the pledges. For example, here are the pledge totals of the top four bikers:

- Craig Schaffer, \$2,230.
- B.J. Irwin, \$1,810.
- Tom Walther, \$1,480.
- Ron Henderson, \$1,365.

There were a few glitches. The cyclists weren't expected to move as fast as they did; they were due at the River between 5 and 6, but most arrived between 3 and 4. The result: the "leading" van with food and drink couldn't keep up with the

leaders after half-way. That made for some hungry, thirsty bikers at trail's end. But that was a problem which Charley Borup and Chris Sherman at Molly Brown's made short order of.

And there was one ugly incident en route. A couple of cowboys in a pick-up truck harassed riders near the Sonoma-Marine line, using a stetson hat to swat one rider, and yelling and spitting at several more. A license number was recorded and police were investigating at day's end.

But some of the cycle-by-the-seat-of-your-pants style added zest to this first bike-a-thon. Saturday's pot luck dinner was at the Elfen Retreat atop a hill near Guerneville. The cyclists and volunteers didn't know they were being hosted by the Radical Faeries.

Laurie McBride, president of the Golden Gate Business Association and one of the van drivers, was surprised when she showed up at the bottom of a dark hillside to be greeted by a woman "in full face paint wearing deer horns or something on her head. And this long flowing robe."

The pavilion at the top of the hill was lit by flickering firelight, adding an eerie glow to the Faeries, clad in their face-paint, antlers and robes. For the hungry bikers, the exotic curried dishes laid out in buffet were just fine, and a good time was had by all.

The only people who may have been disappointed in the whole affair were the good Gay citizens of the Russian River.

Bike-a-Thon a Success

(Continued from previous page)

Expecting the party of the springtime—with more than a hundred city cyclists and volunteers in town—they packed the bars and discos. But most of the bike-a-thon crew was fast asleep by 9:30. That happens when you arise at 5 a.m. and pedal a hundred miles.

The River community was solidly behind the bike-a-thon. Resorts offered free lodging, with the Woods serving as weekend headquarters. On Sunday, the AIDS Foundation put on a three-hour program to honor its volunteers for the past year and the Woods provided the site. The day before, members of the River AIDS Support Group travelled out to Bridgehaven near Jenner to cheer on the arriving cyclists.

At every turn, people pitched in when they were needed. The B.A.R. dispatched a van with a reporter and a photographer. By



Bob Bolan (Photo: Rink)

noon time, the news van was one of the "sweep" vans—running up and down the highway to rescue cyclists. The only rescue happened after the van went into a ditch.

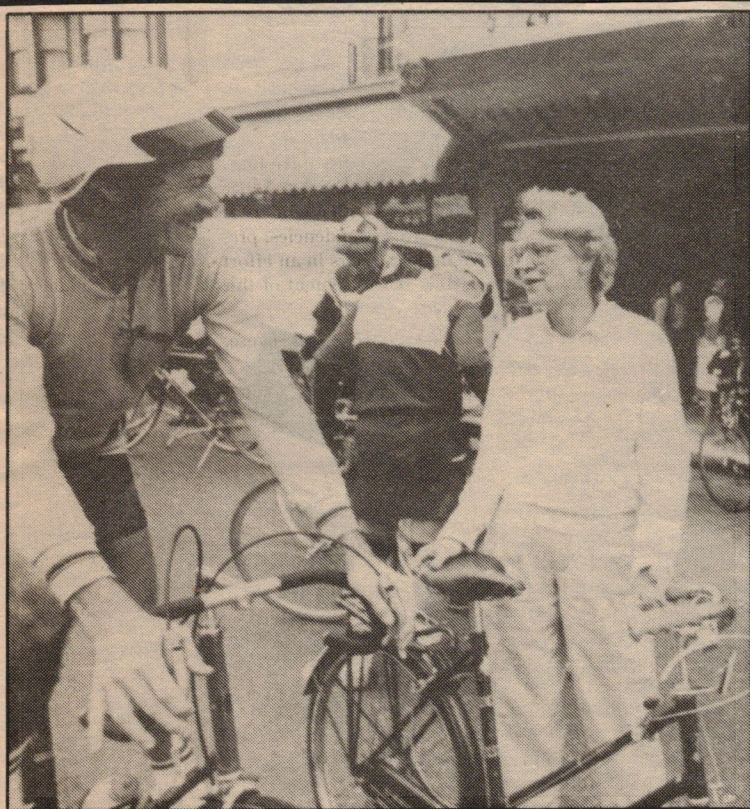
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The bike-a-thon proved several things. First, for those still in doubt, the San Francisco Gay and Lesbian community proved itself capable of rising to any challenge to support its own. Who else could put on such an event, on such short notice, with almost no cash?

Second, the bike-a-thon proved that we can get positive energy out of the tragedy of the AIDS crisis. Anyone who doubts that should take part in next year's bike-a-thon. There's only one thing necessary to get some of that positive energy out: putting a little positive energy in.

That energy may not be able to move mountains but last weekend, it was enough to get 62 Lesbians and Gay men over the mountains.

B. Jones



On the Road. Sup. Louise Renne pedalled with Gay Bike-a-Thon on Saturday from Castro to the Golden Gate. (Photo: Rink)

Following is the list of 62 cyclists who took part in Pedaling for Pride '85, as recorded by Different Spokes Bicycle Club:

Nadav Aharonov

John Ashby

Victoria Allenback

Richard Bassett

Joanne Bealy

Bob Bolan

Dan Brewer

Lar Bryer

Barbara Bull

Bill Burke

Betsey Carpenter

Richard Cross

Mike Duran

David Feiger

Ken Fountain

Abel Galvan

Greg George

Chip Gibbons

Eileen Glutzer

Les Golden

Margo Goodman

Rob Hanley

Buzz Haughton

Ron Henderson

Godfrey Hicks

Gene Howard

Bob Humason

Mark Indihar

B.J. Irwin

Peter Jenny

Michael John

Eric Johnson

Mark Jolles

Jennifer Jones

Karry Kelley

Jim King

Amy Kleck

Sharon Landee

Mozelle Langford

Bruce Langford

Bruce Matasci

Norman McAllister

Gary McCormack

Don Minnerly

Kathy Moore

Jamie Moran

Bob Munk

Richard Palmer

Ron Perez

Paul Quintilian

Mark Reverdy

Joel Roberts

Craig Schaffert

Jerry Szymczak

Nancy Stevens

Pat Stoner

Walter Teague

Roger Tetrault

Julie Twichell

Tom Walther

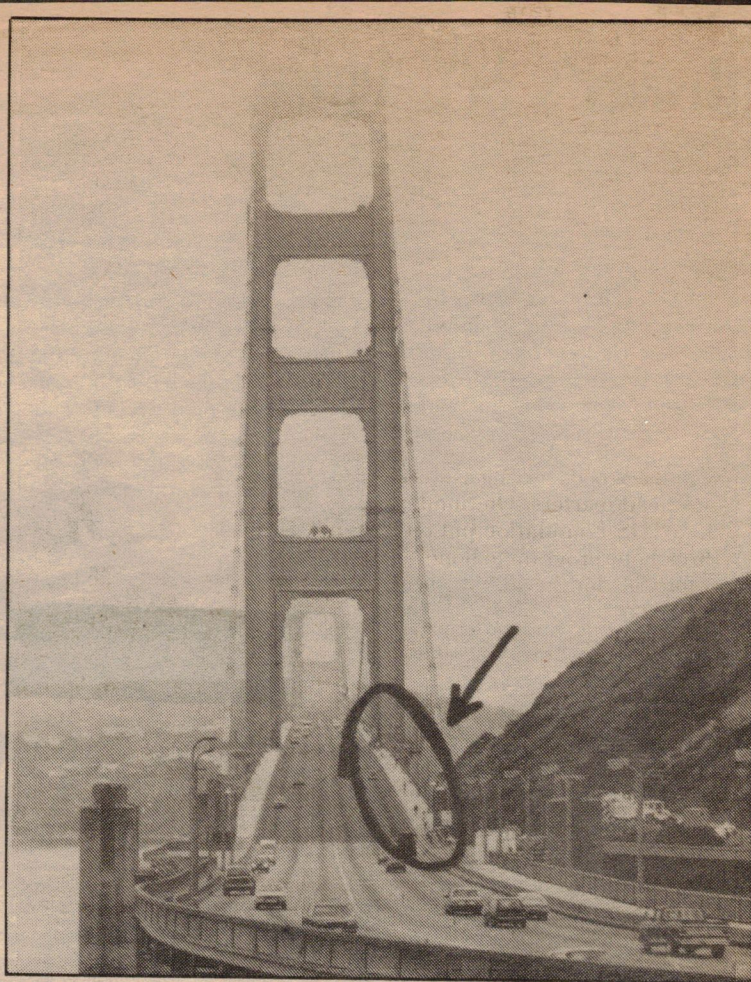
Dennis Westler

Anne Winter

Brent Youngman



Bayside Bombers: Cyclists speed through Sausalito as a fog-wrapped city skyline is their backdrop. (Photo: Rink)



Dwarfed by the Golden Gate, 62 cyclists pedal out of the city en route to Guerneville. (Photo: Rink)



Ready to Go. Two cyclists anticipate the opening horn on Castro Street at start of Bike-a-Thon. (Photo: Rink)



Different Spokes President Bob Humason commends Gene Howard (Photo: Rink)