



Haim Geffen rolls toward the finish line during the 1995 Solvang Prelude.

Raising Money for Research

MTA's Geffen is Training Intensively for 560-Mile California AIDS Ride in June

By BILL HEARD, Editor

(Feb. 17) On Sunday, June 4, the MTA's Haim Geffen will climb aboard his Trek 2100 road bike in San Francisco and begin a 560-mile, seven-day run to Century City. And, he'll do it for money – not for himself, but for the Jeffery Goodman Special Care Clinic at the Gay & Lesbian Center of Los Angeles.

Along with some 2,500 other cyclists, Geffen, 53, will participate in California AIDS Ride 7, an annual event to raise money and awareness for those suffering from HIV infection and AIDS. To qualify as a rider, Geffen must raise at least \$2,500 by May 11 as a donation to the Goodman Clinic for AIDS research and services.

Lucky to help the cause

"I've been training for a long time, biking and running," says Geffen, a transportation project manager in RTP&D and 20-year employee. "I feel lucky to be able to help this cause."

Geffen was moved by the death from AIDS a few years ago of a fellow UCLA graduate. He also was saddened by the death from AIDS in January, 1999, of Ryan Nakagawa, the MTA's late Ethics manager.

"I remembered him giving presentations about ethics," says Geffen. "He looked so good and vibrant, and he had such a sense of humor. But then, after watching him deteriorate from the disease, I was inspired to look for a way to help people with AIDS."

Veteran runner and biker

Geffen is training hard for the AIDS Ride and also for the 26.2-mile LA Marathon, March 5. A veteran amateur runner and biker, he is cross training to increase his stamina for the two events.

On Mondays and Fridays, he swims. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, he

runs five miles. On Wednesdays and Sundays, he cycles at least 50 miles. On Saturdays, he runs as many as 24 miles. As training continues, Geffen expects to cycle up to 100 miles. "It's double training now," he says, "but, after March 5, I'll focus more on bicycle training."

Despite his experience in previous 100-mile rides and his intense training schedule, Geffen finds the AIDS Ride to be daunting. "It's seven days averaging about 75 miles a day, but some days cycling 100 miles."

A real challenge

"The first day is OK. You can ride it and maybe be tired when you finish," he says. "But, when you're already sore and have to get on the bike the second day and the third day and everything is hurting, it's a real challenge."

Haim Geffen was born in 1946 in Poland to a Polish father and Romanian mother. Although his Jewish parents managed to elude the Nazis during World War II, his family lost most of its members to the Holocaust. The Geffens moved to Israel in 1948 when Haim was 2 years old.

As a youngster, Geffen lived at Gevar-Am, an agricultural kibbutz just north of the Gaza Strip near the Biblical city of Ashkelon, famous for its association with Samson and Delilah. The kibbutzim grew peaches, plums and other fruits and ran a large dairy.

Served in Six-Day War

He enlisted for three years in the Israeli Air Force at age 18 and served as an aircraft mechanic. During the Six-Day War against Egypt, Syria and Jordan in 1967, he flew as part of an aircrew delivering supplies to Israeli troops in the Sinai Desert. After his service, Geffen worked as a mechanic for El Al Airlines before immigrating to the United States in 1970.

He graduated from UCLA in 1975 with a degree in geography, then earned a master's degree in urban planning. He joined the SCRTD in 1979.

Geffen and his wife, Leslie, the director of a private school, live in Encino with their children, Talia, 16, a high school junior, and son, Yoni, 14, a ninth-grader.

Editor's Note: If you're interested in helping Haim Geffen raise money for the Jeffery Goodman Special Care Clinic at the Gay & Lesbian Center, you may contact him at 922-6977.

HIV+ / AIDS TODAY	
The Jeffrey Goodman Special Care Clinic is expected to test some 12,000 people this year.	Worldwide, more than 75 percent of adult HIV infections have resulted from heterosexual intercourse.
18 - 20 million people are HIV-infected worldwide.	The rate of infection has tripled in just one year from one every 17 seconds to one every 5.5 seconds.
13.9 million people worldwide have died of AIDS: 400,000 in the United States	50 percent of all new infections are in people under age 25.

70,000 in California 24,000 in Los Angeles County	
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