

"When I was feeling tired or down, it didn't last long. As I was passing Dave, a legless rider who completed the ride by pedaling with his hands, it put things in perspective for me."



### MTA's Haim Geffen Faced Challenges on San Francisco-to-Century City AIDS Ride

(June 14) On the third day of the 560-mile California AIDS Ride 7 the MTA's Haim Geffen - an experience biker and tri-athlete - faced his toughest challenge.

It was a 75-mile stretch of highway between King City and Paso Robles on the Central Coast. Crabbing into blast furnace crosswinds, he and 2,700 other cyclists struggled up "The Quad Buster," a steep slope in Salinas National Park.

"It was a very tough workout for the quad muscles in our thighs," recalls the 53-year-old transportation planning manager. At the end of that day, the hot shower provided by event organizers was bliss and even the hard ground beneath his pup tent didn't prevent a sound sleep.

"Riders carried a photo or name of a loved one who had died of AIDS, but they also wore costumes with decorated helmets that created a party atmosphere."



Every day, a sea of bicycles and tents.

### Poignant opening ceremonies

AIDS Ride 7 began June 4 with poignant opening ceremonies at San Francisco's Fort Mason. "But, at the same time, it was a festive occasion with lots of color and excitement in the air," Geffen says.

To qualify for the AIDS Ride, he raised \$3,000 - of which \$800 came from MTA donors - to



support the Jeffery Goodman Special Care Clinic at the Gay & Lesbian Center of Los Angeles. In total, the event garnered more than \$11.25 million for housing and medical support of people with the AIDS virus.

Following the ceremony, the two-wheeled throng rode through the city in triumph as cheering thousands turned out, waving photos of loved ones who had died of AIDS. Similar scenes were repeated at many of the communities the bikers passed through enroute to the finish line in Century City.

"There was a sense of community that bound us together to accomplish a goal and have fun at the same time."

Life on the road pedaling 65 to 100 miles a day during the seven-day ride was hard, but Geffen made a number of new friends among the group he found himself riding with each day. And there were rest stops every 10 to 20 miles with food, energy drinks and massage therapists, as well as mechanics to fix an ailing bike. There was entertainment some nights, including a talent show.



At the end of the ride, Geffen is greeted by his son Yoni, 14; and daughter Talia, 16.

#### Mayor Riordan joined the ride

On the event's final day, Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riordan and his wife, Nancy, joined the ride into Century City for closing ceremonies. Geffen enjoyed his own reunion with his wife, Leslie; daughter, Talia, 16; son Yoni, 14; and father-in-law Dr. Norman Mirman.

"Looking back, It was a great experience and I'm really happy I did it," the road-weary biker says. "If I do it again, I'll have a better idea of how to pace myself. I'll be more relaxed and able to socialize more with the other riders."

Geffen's next challenges: the Malibu Triathlon in September and the LA Marathon next March. And maybe a couple of other triathlons in between, who knows.

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See "MTA's Haim Geffen Starts California AIDS Ride June 7" and "Youngest Rider is Son of MTA Division 10 Employee"