



His Red Ribbon - One PPRAC Ride Quest

By Kathy Freed

“Is there a van behind us who could pick up something for me?”, one young man asked tentatively. It was already 80 degrees on the third day of the PPRAC and the bicyclists as well as the support crew were bathed in sweat, although it was only 8:30 in the morning. It was only 30 miles into our 104-mile ride but New England was enduring a record-breaking heat wave and the fort cyclists from Pa were headed home. We had left New Hampshire two days before in our journey covering five states (NH,VT,MA,NY,PA) and 540 miles in 6 days. Pinned to each rider was a red ribbon with a name written on it. This young man had lost his ribbon – for the third time.

He had turned back twice to find it already, but it was getting harder to play catch up with his riding partners and he still had many miles to put in until we reached North Adams, MA. Although he didn't ask me to turn back, I told him that I would. I had to stop and think about it, though. As one vehicle in our caravan of six and support crew of twelve, I was responsible for forty riders. It was hot and everyone ahead needed water. There were plenty of things I would not have driven back for – but I recognized that look in this riders' eyes and we turned around. We all shared that pain of losing someone we loved to Cancer. The fight against Cancer brought us together in this quest to ride yet another PPRAC (out tenth) and Cancer was the reason we wore red ribbons to honor those who are cancer survivors, are still fighting, or have lost the battle.

His red ribbon was lying on the road. It wasn't hard to find but it was painful to read the two names written on it. Cancer had taken both of the young man's parents while he was still in high school, several years apart. No details were given. None were needed. His red ribbon rode many more miles, duct-taped to his bike. Five hundred forty miles, in six days of grueling heat, awesome mountains, flat tires, hard gym floors, peanut butter and jelly, mosquitoes. Raising money to fight this disease was goal. The quest was to dig down deep, endure pain and to honor those we loved and who endured so much more.

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