

Team Raven Lunatics Does Sarcoma Week July 17th – 25th



[Team Raven Lunatics](#), a small group of ultra marathon cyclists, participated in two events during [Sarcoma Week](#) and will be participating in one more event coming up in October to help raise funds and awareness for sarcoma research.

The weekend of July 17th and 18th was the [Seattle to Portland \(STP\)](#) 200 mile classic bicycle ride. David Bradley (that's me), a current sarcoma patient, was joined by Marilyn Hayward, a 17 year sarcoma survivor, and Joe Keenan, a transplant recipient due to liver cancer (his transplant was two years ago), as well as a number of recumbent cyclist from around the country. I was on a two-month break from chemo treatments to allow some general chemo recovery and some cycling training. STP would be my longest ride since February 2009.

STP started very early, 5 am, from the University Washington in Seattle. 10,000 cyclists (released waves) headed south on back roads. The first major rest/food stop was at the REI store in Kirkland, WA. With the large number of cyclist the road our group soon got split up. At the REI stop we were able to regroup and refuel. The day



STP Group with me in Green and Marilyn in white and Sandy in Blue. Joe is taking the picture.

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A quick rest break

started with overcast skies, which provided excellent riding temperatures. The cyclists had by now thinned out and we were able to ride the pace we wanted to ride, around 15 mph. We were prepared for a slower pace if I required it but were pleased to find I could ride at a relaxed but steady pace. We continued south along roads that paralleled I-5, passing through Puyallup, Spanaway, Roy, Tenino, and Centralia on our way to the night's camp at the Winlock Elementary School gym floor.

The ride was well supported by Cascade Bicycle Club, with very well stocked rest/food stops every 10-15 miles and the local Goldwing Association providing excellent vehicle support. A concern of mine (and my wife's) was just how far I could ride, having just come off chemo treatments so recently and not having much time to train. As a back up we had Sandy Earl, a top notch ultra marathon bicycle racer herself, driving our own support van in case I need to bail out early (doctor's orders). Sandy would drive ahead, park, and ride the course in reverse until she met up with us and then escort us back to where she parked. I think she put in almost as many miles on the bike as we did. As luck would have it my cycling legs remembered how to ride and I was able to complete the entire distance without having to rely on the support vehicle. Our support van did get some looks as it was decked out with the Sarcoma signs and TeamRavenLunatics.com banners.



Support Van Sign

The sun came out just as we arrived at Centralia, WA, which is the midpoint in the ride. Located at the College there was camping, food, bands, food, massage, food, and did I mention food. Especially ice cream bars and bottles of ice-cold chocolate milk, handed out by the Dairy Gold Princess herself with some help from her court. After a refreshing break we continued on to Winlock at mile 120 for our camp.

I was pleasantly surprised to discover that a massage table was set up in the gym and promptly got my name in on the list before I headed to the showers (ugh...cold water only). After the massage I found that my legs were behaving themselves and that completing the remaining 82 miles in the next day was a realistic goal. Sure I was going to be sore the next week but it would be a good kind of sore. We enjoyed a great pasta dinner at the local Senior Community Center, a little story swapping, and an early bedtime. After a day of honest exercise the whole gym was full of cyclist snoring up a storm by 9:30 pm.

Sunday was another early start. Breakfast at 5:30 am and on the road by 6:30 am. There was a little drizzle out when we started but by 8:30 the road dried up, but the sky remain clouded over until very near the finish line in Portland. STP is a pretty flat course but there are some hills. The biggest is at mile 43 on Saturday, but the Sunday ride has many small rolling hills. As we traveled south we had views of Mt. Saint Helens as well as Mt. Rainier. It is amazing how far away you can see those mountains. The Volcano Evacuation Route signs along the way did not inspire confidence however. With 50 miles to go we reached the Washington-Oregon border at the Lewis and Clark Bridge. This bridge is not bike friendly, with lots of traffic and expansion joints. The DOT required that cyclists be lead over in escorts.

Lewis and Clark Bridge



We queued up and waited our turn. All was fine until one of our group experienced a minor mechanical problem just after we started up the bridge. The problem was quickly handled but not before losing our escort. We made it safely over the bridge but our group managed to get separated at this point. I rode on figuring I would eventually catch the group at one of the rest stops. I didn't find the group but did get to ride with Sandy until the last rest stop 16 miles before the finish line. I assumed the rest of the group would be waiting for me at the finish line. The remainder of the ride was pleasant, I was feeling very good. In fact the best I have felt in a very long time. Cycling is very good therapy, physically and mentally. When I reached Portland the route took me to the "Steel Bridge" which has a bike/pedestrian path below the auto deck. I stopped to take pictures and to my surprise the rest of my group arrived behind

me. I must have missed them at a rest stop. This gave me a chance to ride into the finish line with my riding buddies.

The finish line is at a park and resembled a giant circus with huge crowds welcoming in the riders. More of my friends were at the finish line when I arrived. The feeling of completing this ride after a year and a half of treatments and surgery is hard to explain. I was as excited to complete STP any much longer race I have completed. To have done it with my friends who supported me during my treatment made it all that much more special. Yes, I was sore the following week and may have walked a little "funny" a few days, but it was well worth it.



David at STP finish

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for



Dennis Johnson at the start line

[Race Across Oregon \(RAO\)](#), July 24th and 25th is a 535 mile race with over 40,000 feet of climbing. It is considered one of the toughest 48 hours races around. Dennis Johnson, a good friend from Houston, Texas entered this race and asked me to head a 3 person crew to support him during his solo attempt. Dennis was kind enough to sign on to support Team Sarcoma as part of his effort.

RAO is a very tough race with only about 50% of the solo racers who enter this race finishing. Racers race for up to 48 hours (the time limit) without sleep, supported by a personal support van and crew. Bill Spaeth and Sharon Stevens, both accomplished ultra marathon racers, joined me as support for Dennis. Again our van would be sporting signs for Team Sarcoma and the Liddy Shriver Sarcoma Initiative. RAO starts at 5 am at Hood River OR, and the racers start by climbing south along Hwy 35. After a 37 mile climb the racers turn east and head through the Oregon backcountry and the small towns of Tygh Valley, Moro, Condon, Heppner. The day turned very hot with temperatures reaching the low 100's. Dennis was 'fortunate' to be able to train in the heat of Houston, but did have some trouble with the dryness of the Oregon heat. Dennis paced himself well while the crew made sure he kept up on his fuel and hydration. At Heppner we saw the sun go down and switched to "follow support mode" where the van remains close behind the racer providing lights and a safety barrier. As night fell so did the temperatures, and Dennis' speed picked up. Dennis rode well though the night with only a few breaks off the bike for some hot soup. We were treated to a full moon that night to help light the way.



David, Sharon, and Bill pose by the Deschutes River

Sunrise found us riding by the John Day River through the small towns of Kimberly, Monument, and Spray. This is one of the few places on the course where the road is flat and level for any distance. I'm



Kimberly Ahead

sure Dennis was please to have a break from the constant climbs and descents he had been doing for the last 300 miles. Just before the town of Fossil the climbing resumed. With 125 miles to go we cross the John Day River one last time and started the first of the last three major climbs left. At this point Dennis had now ridden farther in one ride than he had ever done before. The day was warming up but Dennis was in good spirits despite the long climb before him. The crew continued to watch his nutritional and hydration needs, and selected some good motivation music to play for him over van-mounted speakers. Half way up the climb we

saw a van parked ahead with "spectators" wildly waving at us. Those spectators turn out to be friends form Portland, and Dennis' wife and daughter who flew out to see him finish. A quick stop for sweaty hugs and Dennis was back on the bike to finish his climb. Even with the extra time required due to the heat we calculated that Dennis had sufficient time to complete the race within the allotted time.

Again as we went into the second night he temperatures lowered and Dennis' speed picked up. The penultimate climb up Hwy 97 up to Tygh Ridge was a very long and steep climb. The rewarded for Dennis' work was some fast smooth descents. The last big climb was up Forest Road 44 through the wee hours of the morning. There were lots of false summits and faint views in the dark of Mt. Hood in front

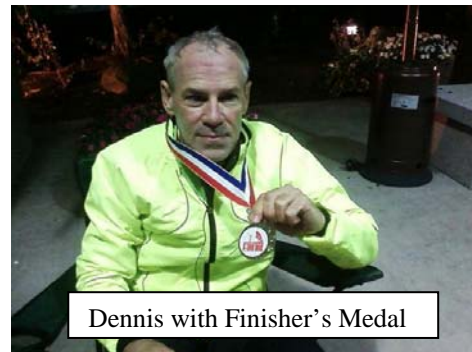


Bill gets Dennis back on the road after a short break

of us. Dennis was very tired by this point, having been on the bike for almost two full days and nights. Dennis was mentally sharp and surprisingly managing a very good pace for someone who had just crossed the 500 mile mark. Finally we reached the summit! Woo Hoo ! Almost all down hill from here. When we reached Hwy 35 we had 17 miles to go. Dennis was riding cautiously. While it was downhill, he knew he was very tired and his reactions were not as sharp as they should have been. Dennis had ridden a very smart race and was't going to take risks. We arrived at the finish line to the cheers of a small but dedicated group of ultra racers, race

organizers, and of course family and friends. 47 hours, 24 minutes, 30 seconds. After Dennis received his finisher's medal and had some photos taken we turned him over to his family for a couple hours sleep before the awards breakfast the next day.

The breakfast was great, held on an outside deck overlooking the Columbia River. Stories were told, of success, and failure, of hardship and hallucinations, and of thrill of being a part of such an epic race. George Thomas, race director, took time to recognize everyone's efforts, as well as award prizes to the first finishers and gag prizes to those who distinguish themselves by getting off course, having the most flat tires, or other such adventures. At one point George announced his appreciation for my efforts in designing the route book the racers and crew use to navigate the race route. He called me up in front of the 100 or so racers, crew and family gathered and provided me with an opportunity to plug Sarcoma Week and Team Raven Lunatics. For a few minutes I had a captive audience to tell my story to. What I found interesting was that up to that moment I had completely forgotten I had cancer. I was back in a real life doing the adventures I that I used to do before cancer. I forgot how nice it was to be a "normal" person again (although my wife would argue that these adventures are not normal). I could not have reached that point without the support and treatment I received at MD Anderson in Houston and Eureka Internal Medicine in Eureka. A year and a half ago I didn't know if I would ever be racing and crewing again. Now I'm looking at the calendar to see what else I might be able to train for.



Dennis with Finisher's Medal

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Next up for Team Raven Lunatics: [Furnace Creek 508](#), a 48 hour race in October. Like RAO this is a non-stop race that starts in Santa Clarita, CA and races through the Antelope Valley, Mojave Desert, and Death Valley before finishing in Twenty Nine Palms, CA, 508 miles later. I will be part of a 4-person relay team, taking turns riding non-stop (with van support again). My Raven Lunatics teammates will be William Spaeth, Jim Kern, and John Schlitter, with Sandy Earl acting as crew chief for us. My part of the race will be approximately 108 miles into the race, broken into two shifts. We will be trying to set a new record for 4-person recumbent team and expect to complete the course in less than 30 hours. You can follow us in real time at www.TeamRavenLunatics.com or my twitter feed @bradleydr.

Sarcoma week has been great. To date TeamRavenLunatics has raised approximately \$1000 for Sarcoma research with pledges for more donations. Sarcoma Week events have also provided me the chance to speak with many people about sarcoma and what the Sarcoma Initiative is doing to combat this rare cancer. I am lucky to be able to apply my passion for cycling to this effort.

David Bradley