



Cycling to Conquer Sarcoma

Liddy Shriver '87

Elizabeth “Liddy” Shriver was in the prime of her life. At 35 years old, the cycling enthusiast felt she could take on the world. That was until April 2002 when Liddy received devastating news—she had been diagnosed with Ewing’s sarcoma. Suddenly, Liddy found herself taking on a valiant struggle to save her life.

Ewing’s sarcoma, a rare cancer of the bone and soft tissue, usually affects children and young adults. It accounts for only 1 percent of all adult cancers and has a survival rate of only 5 percent at five years, according to the Sarcoma Foundation of America.

Liddy needed to have a tumor and eight inches of her tibial nerve, which supports the calf muscle and stabilizes the ankle, removed in July 2002. Eventually, the sarcoma spread to Liddy’s lungs and she underwent two rounds of chemotherapy and two clinical trials, all of which were unsuccessful.

But instead of giving in to her illness, Liddy, who lives in Jersey City, New Jersey, embraced life with a passion that most people never do. After the chemo, she embarked on a bike tour in April 2003 with family members and friends. Dubbing themselves Team Sarcoma, the cyclists logged 50 miles a day for four days through Liddy’s former home state of Louisiana, raising nearly \$14,000 for research.

Because of the operation and the lung metastases, Liddy has difficulty breathing and using one of her legs to cycle, so she traverses flat terrain. In spite of this obstacle, she has remained resilient and determined to do what she loves best. “On a bike, I get a sense of freedom that I don’t get any other way,” she says.

The Shriver family had such a positive experience with the bike tour in Louisiana that they wanted to continue to raise money for sarcoma research and increase awareness of the need for young adults in clinical trials. They set up another tour so that people from other parts of the world could help them in their mission. In early July, they joined friends from Denmark and other countries to form an international Team Sarcoma of cyclists for a tour through some of the most scenic islands in the Danish archipelago.

Cyclists had the option of joining the Shriver family in Denmark or biking on the exact days and times the Shriviers were cycling. A total of 226 cyclists from Japan, Portugal, Serbia, Sweden, Switzerland, the Ukraine, and the United States joined the 28 members of Team Sarcoma who cycled in Denmark. Liddy’s surgeon, Dr. Murray Brennan, and four colleagues from Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in Manhattan, were among the 226 cyclists.

The cyclists raised more than \$70,000 for the Sarcoma Foundation of America and collectively logged more than 7,800 miles, somehow managing to fit their volunteer efforts around their regular workweeks, according to Liddy’s father Bruce.

Soon after the tour ended, Liddy began another round of chemotherapy and hopes that the off-study regimen she is undergoing, which involves administering FDA-approved drugs that have not been tested in combination, will arrest the growth of her tumors.

“Perhaps the best thing about the bike tours is that for several days, I really don’t feel much like a cancer patient. My last chemotherapy is far enough in the past that I feel good,” she said.

To find out how to donate to Team Sarcoma, visit http://theshriviers.us/d_donation.htm.