Bill Gafford, co-survivor and Tour de Pink father and supporter

My name is Bill, and I am Lindsay Gafford’s Dad. Lindsay rode in Tour de Pink East Coast last year and I was a guest of hers. I kind of invited myself so I was glad that I was welcomed enthusiastically by both Lindsay and Jon, her partner. I was concerned about a young lady (who had not spent a lot of time riding or training for this ride) riding 211 miles in 3 days while undergoing chemotherapy. I was concerned not only about the ride being too grueling for her in her less-than-optimal physical condition, but also the mental repercussions of falling short of her goal. I had a lot of questions:

- How would she deal with a ride this long?
- Would she be out there riding alone?
- If she had trouble, who would be there to help?
- Could she handle it physically?
- Is this actually healthy to do while undergoing treatment?
- Was her bike and equipment up to the challenge?
- Would she know when to throw in the towel if her body was not up to the challenge?

The ride was three days. 60 miles the first day. 100 miles the second day. And 51 miles on day three.

**Day 1, 60 miles**

As I looked around at the other participants on day one, I saw lots of strong, experienced people. Did any of these ladies have cancer too? Or were they riding in support or in memory of someone else? I could tell Lindsay was nervous and I tried to be positive and encouraging but I wasn’t sure I believed she could do this. As they lined up for the ride, they asked the “Survivors” to line up in front. I now noticed Lindsay’s bike jersey had the word “Survivor” on the sleeve.

There were about 50 women, most of them between 25-50 years in age, lined up at the start of the ride with Survivor on their uniforms. I teared up a little as they took the Survivor Photo but I immediately felt better about Lindsay and her chances of completing the ride. Behind the Survivors were another 150 riders both individuals and teams supporting or in memory of someone with breast cancer. They ranged in age from teenagers to mid-seventies. It was an impressive sight!

She met another lady that was a survivor and on the board of the YSC who asked her to ride with her and her husband. I felt better and I am sure Lindsay did too. Now she wouldn’t be alone out there! Once the ride started, I assumed the roles of spectator, cheerleader and pit crew. Jon and I jumped in the car and would jump ahead to the next rest stop/cheer station to be there as they rolled in. We cheered for each rider as they made it to the next checkpoint all the while looking for Lindsay to come riding in. As she came in, I would immediately bombard her with questions:

- How are you feeling?
- How is the bike working?
- What can I get you?
- Do you need anything?
- How are you feeling now?
- Is it going well?
- Do you feel strong?

I am sure it was very annoying for her to deal with this at every rest stop but she didn’t show it. Jon and I would help get her fed, refill her water bottles, check her bike, make sure she had what she needed and get her back
on the road. Then we would jump in the car and head to the next rest stop. As we drove, we would update via
text Lindsay’s family and friends. I was so proud of her as she rolled across the finish line at the end of day 1.
She had ridden 60 miles. Again I annoyed her with all the questions. She was tired but feeling pretty good. But
would she be up for a 100 mile ride tomorrow? After an evening dinner with other riders and YSC organization,
it was into bed by 10:30. She had a 6:00 AM mandatory riders meeting in the morning followed by a 7:00 AM
Start.

Day 2, 100 Miles

The day came early. Again the questions. How are you feeling this morning? What can we do? What can we
get you? As we sent her off, I was concerned. Yes, she did 60 miles yesterday but did it take a toll? 100 is a lot
more. Can she handle itAs she headed to the starting line, she joined a new group of riders she had met the
day before. Yes! Again she had someone to ride with and would not be alone. As the day progressed, we went
to the rest stops….17 miles, 34 miles, 52 miles going through the same routine as day one. Each time I was
amazed by her stamina and attitude. She never complained and was never down. She always left the rest
stops ready for the road ahead. The rest stop at mile 88 was major. It was 36 miles since their last stop. She
must be exhausted. Is the day taking its toll? She rolled in, in good spirits - tired, but ready for the final push.
That’s when I knew, she would not only finish the day today but she would finish this ride…..all 211 miles. It
was a relief to realize this and I felt extremely proud of her. As they pulled into Harrah’s in Atlantic City (the
hotel for the last night), Lindsay was very tired but really glad to see Jon and I. After a shower, and a rest, she
went down to attend the nightly riders dinner. Jon was able to join her. YSC recognized her for being one of
two survivors who raised the most funds (thanks to all of her donors!!!). After dinner a quick beer and then off
to bed. 7:00 AM mandatory riders meeting and 8:00 AM start tomorrow!

Day 3, 51 Miles

Again with the questions? Really? After yesterday’s ride, I knew she would finish the race so I figured today
would be kind of anticlimactic. Today she had joined up with a huge group of riders, “The Clydesdales”, a large
diverse group of riders that had raised over $100K for the YSC on this ride. Again, I was glad she would have
some folks to ride with! Jon and I hit both of the rest stops, cheered, and got her going and then headed down
to Cape May for the finish line. Time seemed to go slow as we waited for her. There was lots of support and
cheering at the finish line. As Lindsay rolled in, I got a picture of her crossing the finish line and went to give
her a hug and congratulations. I was surprised how emotional it was and I teared up as I told her how proud I
was. She set out to do it, and she did it. AMAZING!!! Then of course the questions…..How are you feeling?
She had some co-workers show up at the finish line and they brought flowers for her which was very cool. And
of course Jon was there to share in her accomplishment.

As I look back on the ride, I was really impressed with how organized and supportive it was. Everything went
off very smoothly and the level of support she received from other riders was tremendous. The ride is an easy
metaphor for what she is going through. Cancer is a long ride. Treatments are the ride, scans, are the rest
stops, the continual questions….how are you feeling? But the community is very supportive and she has a
VERY strong partner in Jon to cheer her on and support her. Lindsay is a very strong woman and what I
learned most this week is that she is a Survivor.

Proud to be your Dad!
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