Positive TRACTION
May 2007 • www.pospeds.org

DOING EVERY MILE HE CAN

With three AIDS/LifeCycles already under his belt, **Stephen May** goes for his fourth – and shows no sign of letting up anytime soon

By PAUL SERCHIA

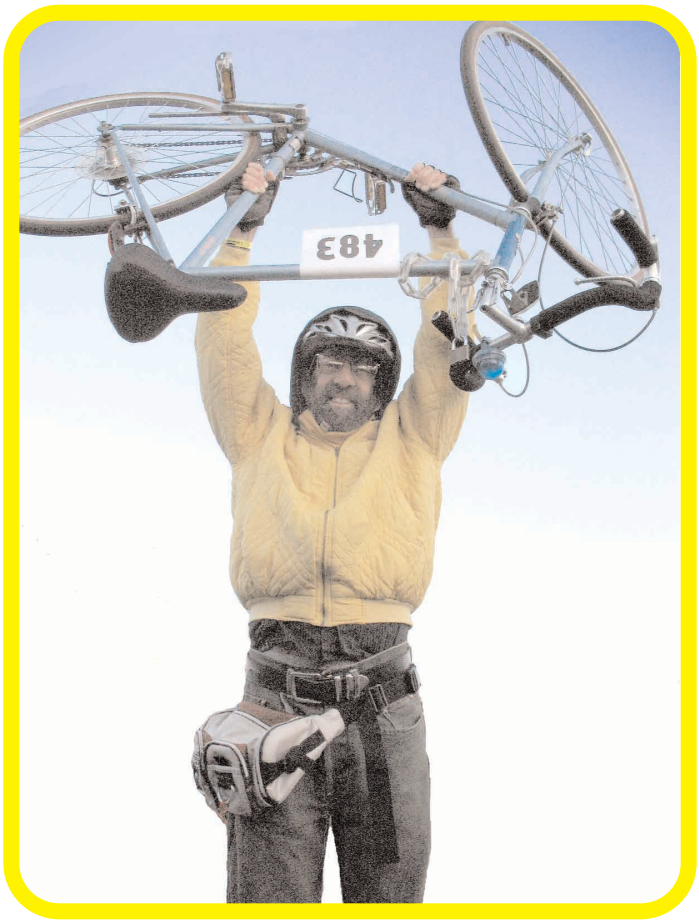
Anyone who is not HIV-positive may wonder what it's like to know that you are infected with HIV.

Stephen May, AIDS/LifeCycle Rider #1130, knows better than most people. According to Stephen, he was among the first individuals in Los Angeles County to be tested for exposure to antibodies that were suspected to cause AIDS. Before the antibody test even became available in Los Angeles in 1984, Stephen traveled to Long Beach, where the test had just began to be offered at the Center there.

"I was expecting to learn that I was negative," Stephen said, "but instead I was positive."

Stephen said that the news came as a surprise.

"As soon as I heard something was going around that was sexually transmitted and that people were advised not to exchange body fluids I immediately switched to what we now call safe sex. That means I probably got infected in 1979, when a lot of people were being infected but didn't even know that there was something going around."



Stephen May warms up for Day on the Ride, April 21, in Santa Monica

A pioneer in the pandemic

As one of the first people in Los Angeles County to test positive, Stephen didn't have access to peer support, antiretroviral treatment or even much information about what it meant to be infected with HIV. In many ways, he was blazing the trail as a person with HIV: a trail that far too many people would follow.

Stephen recalls that he handled the news about his sero-status in a rational manner, " as I handle everything."

"I'm both rational and emotional," Stephen explains. "And my rational side took over that situation. It was just a better choice. That was how I dealt with it. I put it into perspective, decided that I would do what I could do and think about my prospects, what my life span would be, what I wanted to do with the rest of my life. That kind of thing."

He added AIDS activism to the social causes that he has supported over his lifetime, a portfolio that also includes the anti-war movement during the Vietnam era and civil rights, among others.

A schoolteacher at the time, Stephen said that he continued to work after learning that he was HIV-positive.

"But then it got to the point that I couldn't work. I would fall asleep in class. Then I knew I had to stop."

After 11 years of teaching in public schools, Stephen retired.

See next page

Inside: TIPS for POS PEDS on AIDS/LifeCycle 6

Pos Ped Stephen May still in the saddle

From front page

Showing the way

Today, Stephen May is 60. And just as he did in the mid-1980s, Stephen continues to blaze a trail for how someone with HIV can choose to live.

In June, Stephen will participate in AIDS/LifeCycle for the fourth consecutive year, and for the third year as a rider.

"I've always been a cyclist," Stephen says, recalling with fondness a four-week group bicycle tour of New England he embarked on at the age of 16, following his sophomore year of high school.

"We carried all our gear, clothes, sheet sleeping sacks, everything in saddle bags," Stephen recalled. "There were no roadies, gear trucks, or buses to camp! We averaged about 35 miles a day, not 85. I'm still a 35-mile-kinda-guy."

When Stephen signed up for AIDS/LifeCycle, however, he didn't think he was strong enough to ride.

"So I volunteered to be a roadie," Stephen said. "But the whole time I was a roadie I was envious of the cyclists!"

On the last day of AIDS/LifeCycle 2, Stephen signed up as a cyclist for the following year's ride, despite uncertainty about his ability to go the distance as a rider.

"One of the things about the ride was that everybody did the best that they could," Stephen says. "So at the end of the day, if you couldn't make it to camp on your own, you were transported there. I knew it would be OK for me to be a cyclist even if I didn't ride every mile."

One mile at a time

Over the two years that Stephen has participated in AIDS/LifeCycle from the saddle, he has been able to complete the entire route on any day twice, on the shortest day of the ride, when the route from Santa Maria to Lompoc is 42 miles.

"The other days, I'm on the route at 6:30 in the morning and I do the best that I can. When it's time to SAG to camp, I SAG to camp. I don't really feel too bad about it, because I know that I'm doing the best that I can.

"If I have to walk up the hill, I walk up the hill. In fact I'm kind of well known for walking the hills. I call myself a Pos Pedaler and a Pos Walker because I walk up most of the hills."

When asked about his time off of the saddle, Stephen says that he knows that the ride is not "a shuttle service to camp."

"I tell people that they should do the best that they can. The important thing is to raise money, so that people can get services and care, and so [the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center] can fund prevention programs. That's really the point of the ride. It's not to kill yourself cycling up a mountain!"

Stephen May owns several bikes, all of them bought at thrift stores.

Join Pos Peds? A no-brainer

Stephen said that joining Positive Pedalers was not something that he needed to think twice about doing.

" I've been openly positive practically since the time that I tested positive," Stephen said. "I'm just a very open person about everything. As soon as gay liberation started, I became openly gay. That's just the way I am."

Stephen describes Positive Pedalers as "a perfect combination" where many aspects of his life intersect.

"I'm a bicyclist; I'm HIV-positive; I'm a very social person; I'm a political activist. I'm other things, too, but those are some of the major ones. Being HIV-positive is one part of my life; it's not the center of my life."

Stephen looks forward to remaining involved with AIDS/LifeCycle for some time to come.

In it for the long haul

This year Stephen is putting aside what he calls "schnorring" donations from his friends, in the interest of increasing the likelihood that they will support him with contributions in future years.

Most of the donations that Stephen plans to bring to San Francisco on Orientation Day will come out of his own pocket, although he welcomes AIDS/LifeCycle gifts in lieu of presents for his 60th birthday.

He's thrilled that he is part of the AIDS/LifeCycle community.

"One of the things I like about AIDS/LifeCycle is how many people involved are not directly affected," Stephen says. "They might not even know anybody with HIV; they're just good people who want to participate."

He speaks passionately about the many friendships he has struck while on the ride, and while training.

"There will be a group of riders —maybe six or seven of us— and we'll be talking about how difficult a certain hill was, or how good the food is, or some other aspect of the ride. And I'll look around and think, not only do I not know who is gay or who is straight or who is HIV-positive or who is HIV-negative, it doesn't even really seem to matter. And I really like that."

Looking at Stephen's eyes, it's clear for anyone to see that Stephen can't wait to jump back in the saddle for AIDS/LifeCycle for the third time as a rider and for the fourth time since he joined the event, to continue doing the very best he can, for as long he can.

Visit Stephen May's AIDS/LifeCycle home page: www.aidslifecycle.org/1130

TIPS for POS PEDS on AIDS/LIFECYCLE 6!

DAY 1: Sunday, June 3

OPENING CEREMONIES

A procession of **Positive Pedalers** will start Opening Ceremonies. **All Pos Peds should meet at the side of the stage before 5:50 a.m. and form a group.** Organizers will assist you. A group of 10 **Pos Peds** will carry flags to start Opening Ceremonies at 6 a.m. sharp. **Pos Ped Lonnie Payne** will speak in the Opening Ceremonies. **Volunteers needed.**

Liaisons: Peter LaVoie & John Fasesky

RIDE-OUT

The **Positive Pedalers** have the honor of being the first riders out onto the route. We encourage all **Pos Peds** to show the spirit of unity and pride by riding out together. Please wear a **Pos Ped** jersey (preferably one from this year), if you have one. If not, a previous year **Pos Ped** jersey, or any jersey will be fine. We also ask that you take your jackets off and show your jersey at the start. Arm warmers are good to wear at this time. If you must keep your jacket on for warmth/comfort, again, please allow those with their jersey showing to move toward the front of the pack.

Liaison: Sean Ray

MASSAGE SLOTS

One or two massage spots are held for **Pos Peds** members during each time slot. Showing your **Pos Peds** token should get you into a slot even if the regular slots are booked up. This is not a guarantee but a service they provide with courtesy to us. Please limit your visits to massage per the designated number listed by the massage staff (usually no more than two visits while on AIDS/LifeCycle 6).

DAY 2: Monday, June 4

T.R.L. PHOTO

This year we will be taking a photo of our training ride leaders (T.R.L.s). If you are one, want a picture of them, or want to simply thank them for their hard work, come to the photo op. **Check on Orientation Day for updates.**

Liaison: Paul Serchia

DAY 3: Tuesday, June 5

POS PEDS DAY

We receive much recognition, accolades, and support from the riders and staff. Please wear your jersey, fly your flag, or whatever else you may choose to do so you can ride with pride! **Pos Peds** will be featured in the Daily Spin and in the Official AIDS/LifeCycle podcast on Day 3.

POS PEDS SPEECH

During the evening program on Day 3, **Positive Pedaler Sean Ray** will introduce **Nathan Menard**, who will speak during the program. This is one of the most powerful moments for **Positive Pedalers** during the ride. Please be sure to be present to support this part of the program and to be recognized by all.

Liaison: Nathan Menard and Sean Ray

DAY 5: Thursday, June 7

RED DRESS DAY

From the sky above and the roads alongside us, red garb worn by riders appears as a long red ribbon symbolizing the support and pride of our community. We encourage all riders and Roadies to wear red. Don your finest skirt, dress or gown, or red accoutrement, gear or riding jerseys.

POS PEDS PHOTO

Join us at **6 p.m. at the campsite** for the annual **Pos Peds** photo!. Please wear a **Pos Peds** shirt or jersey, if possible. The photo will proudly be displayed on our website and in ALC materials. Bring your camera –and smile!

Liaison: Paul Serchia

DAY 6: Friday, June 8

CANDLELIGHT VIGIL

You don't want to miss this heartfelt, powerful moment at San Buenaventura Beach.

DAY 7: Saturday, June 9

RIDE-IN

Like Opening Ceremonies, a much larger celebration concludes the weeklong ride. **Pos Peds** will lead the ride-in to Closing Ceremonies. **Volunteers needed**.

Liaison: Wilfredo Ortiz

CLOSING CEREMONIES

Park your bike in the **Pos Peds** section when you get to Los Angeles so we can ride in together! Yet again, we have the honor of riding in before all other riders and hold a prominent place in the front of the crowd. Please wear your **Positive Pedalers** jersey proudly and allow those displaying the jersey to be up front. **Pos Ped Beau Thomson** will carry the Riderless Helmet and the **Goodman Family** will escort the Riderless Bicycle. Ten **Pos Peds** will carry flags into the ceremony.

Liaison: Wilfredo Ortiz

Sunday, June 10

2007 PRIDE PARADE

Walk or ride in the annual Pride Parade in West Hollywood. Please register online before the ride at the ALC website or register at camp services. **Volunteers needed**.

Monday, June 11
Tuesday, June 12

S.F. BIKE RETRIEVAL

Set up for **Pos Peds** bike retrieval begins on June 11 in San Francisco. Bike retrieval takes place on Monday and Tuesday, and is taken down on Wednesday. This is a great opportunity for **Pos Peds** not doing the ride this year to help out! Please let us know if you might be available for a shift. **Volunteers needed**.

Liaison: David Duncan

Not registered for ALC 6?

You can still cheer riders on the route, attend Opening and Closing Ceremonies, join Pos Peds in Pride Parades –and register for AIDS/LifeCycle 7!

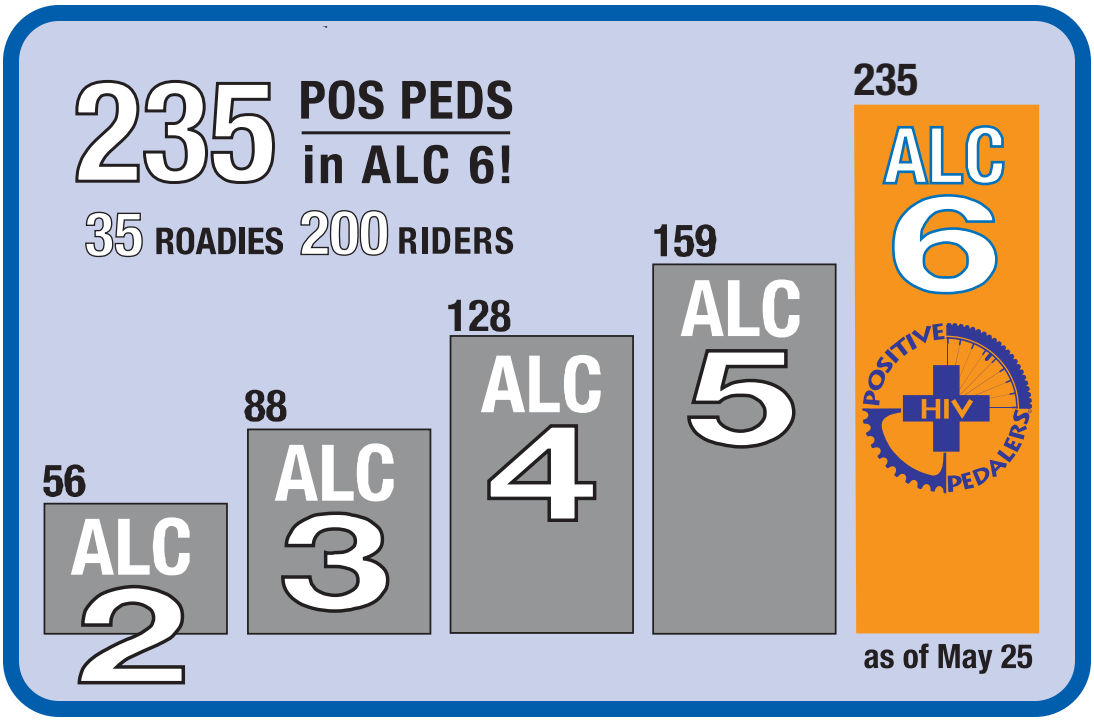
Jerseys going, going . . .

Act fast to order your **2007 Positive Pedalers Jersey** before supplies run out! The jerseys are available for $30 each. Pos Peds who are ALC 6 participants can claim their jersey on Orientation Day, June 2, at the Cow Palace. Jerseys will be shipped (shipping charges apply) to non-ALC 6 participants after ALC 6 ends on June 9.

Please reserve your jersey with David Duncan at **duncanowens@gmail.com**. Our jerseys are sold to members at cost. We welcome any additional dollars you would like to contribute to our general fund. This fund helps us supply jerseys for Pos Peds riders who cannot afford one.

We also have T-shirts available to new members of Positive Pedalers, and will have hats for Roadies and T-shirts for Positive Pedaler supporters on Orientation Day.

Please visit **www.pospeds.org** regularly for news on all of these materials.



Positive TRACTION

POSITIVE TRACTION is the free monthly newsletter for **Positive Pedalers**.

Positive Pedalers is a group of people living with HIV/AIDS committed to eliminating the stigma of disease through our positive public example.

Visit **www.pospeds.org** for information and to become a Positive Pedaler.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Co-Chairs
JOHN FASESKY
jfase@aol.com
PETER LAVOIE
pospedspeterl@yahoo.com
Members
NICK BRINKLEY
hrhnicholas@pacbell.net
DAVID DUNCAN
duncanowens@gmail.com
TRENT MAGGARD
trent.magg@gmail.com
NATHAN MENARD
nathan.menard@sbcglobal.net
WILFREDO ORTIZ
wortiz8485@aol.com
ROSS PAPISH
rosspapish@aol.com
SEAN RAY
seanray@comcast.net
GABRIEL ROCHA
gabo291969@yahoo.com
PAUL SERCHIA
pserchia@sbcglobal.net
BEAU THOMSON
mwtbeau@hotmail.com

Emeritus Members
DALE FREEMAN
dcflaw@pacbell.net
BOB KATZ
bobkatz96@aol.com

POSITIVE TRACTION team
DAVID DUNCAN
BOB KATZ
PAUL SERCHIA