

Road to Chicago



**After 60 bumpy miles,
rider gives new meaning**

to word determination

Day Three put some things in perspective for me. I'd never ridden more than 50 miles in a day before the AIDS ride. On Wednesday morning we rolled out of our tent city in Sparta, Wis., and embarked upon a 56-mile ride and most of us looked upon it as an easy day. Fifty-six miles is nothing after pedaling through more than 200 miles in two days.

It was not an easy day for Scott Dumbrowski of Mount Prospect, Ill. At age 15 his spine was injured in a car accident and he lost the use of his legs.

We spotted him Wednesday morning turning the hand cranks of his custom three-wheeler, muscling up one of the gentle inclines of the Elroy-Sparta Trail. The crushed limestone trail, formerly a Chicago and North Western rail line, stays fairly flat through 32 miles of hilly farm country.

It is a treat for most riders, but difficult for Dumbrowski because of the limestone. His

and I just wanted to do something positive. So I just decided I would do that in his memory.

Santo is a Spokebuster, one of 16 riders taking part in all five AIDS Rides this year.

He has some connection to each geographical area: Washington, New York, Florida, California and Wisconsin, where he was born. "I guess I'm just invigorated by it all, so I don't regret the decision. This is an experience that is hard to put into words: the sense of community, the sense of purpose and the positive feelings that I think everybody else gets."

► **Pledges:** \$6,000; needs \$3,600 more in the next few months to meet the minimum for all five rides. The balance is on his credit card.

► **Pain index:** (10 is excruciating): "Oh, it's about 1, I guess."

► **Message home:** "I'd like to say hi to Felix in Miami, and to Ernesto and Jose in Los Angeles, to Leif in Chicago. They're

because of the milestone. His wide rear wheels were always close to the ditch on the right and plowing through a bumpy median of crushed rock on the left.

Yet he pressed on all day, turning the cranks with the power of his entire upper body, getting to rest areas barely in time to avoid getting sagged (driven to the next stop by a sag wagon, sometimes against your will, to make sure you finish the ride before dark). And finish he did, one of

ies, to Len in Chicago. They're all people I've met on the ride."

Kari Johnson, 23, Richfield, Minn.

► **Job:** Senior studying Recreation and Coaching at St. Cloud State University.

► **Why riding:** Heard AIDS Ride founder Dan Palotta speak at an orientation during her internship last fall at the organization's Minneapolis office. She is the only Minnesotan in the Spokebusters group.

the last to arrive in camp each night, cheered on by a thundering crowd at the finish.

At first, he said, ride officials wouldn't let him participate. But he emphasized that he did not need any special accommodations, and they relented.

Dumbrowski said he's thrilled to be part of the ride. "I've never met so many friendly people. I met a lady from United Airlines who said if I wore this jersey, she'd see what she could do about sponsoring me on rides around the city to get more people like myself involved. A lot of disabled people don't know that

"I've met so many people that have AIDS, that have HIV, and I'm completely inspired by them."

► **Pledges:** She's still \$1,000 short of the minimum, which she will need to raise before the Boston-New York ride.

► **Pain index:** Physically, it's very hard. This isn't my idea of a good time. But emotionally, it's a lot harder because I've gotten to see who I am inside, and I've gotten to see somebody I've never seen before."

► **Message home:** "To my brother, Tom, who has supported me. He's always done that let's-rip-on-little-sister thing. But the first time in his

there are things like this bike out there. It's freedom."

My trip odometer reads 270 miles. We're more than half-way to our goal. Today: a hilly ride to McFarlane, Wis.

— *Ben Welter*

Rider profiles

The Rev. Mark Santo, 64,
Hawthorne, Calif.

► **Job:** Roman Catholic priest; chaplain at a federal prison in Los Angeles.

► **Why riding:** "I've had a couple of very dear friends die of AIDS. Just prior to December, a friend of mine died,

thing. But the first time in his life, last year, he wrote me a letter and said that he loved me and he's proud of me. We made a connection, and now he's just been there for me. He still gives me a hard time, though; he's like, 'OK, Spokebuster, go five rides!' "

— *Join Star Tribune Online's Dave Braunger and Ben Welter on the road to Chicago. You'll find ride updates, a discussion and additional profiles and photos at <http://www.startribune.com/aidsride>.*