

Why Do I Ride?

"Cancer!" There that's the answer; I do not have to write anything more.

I pause, consider this one word answer, and recognize this does not adequately respond to the question frequently posed to me "Why do you ride in the Pan Mass Challenge?"

I ride because of the pain and enjoyment I know from this event and what each of these experiences mean to me and to others.

I know the pain from losing my dad to cancer. How can anyone describe the loss of a parent or child? Even writing these simple words frustrates me because I do not feel that I can share with you the emotional hurt, which runs very deep. My scars will be with me for all my life. (I love you dad!)

I know the pain from listening to family, friends and others I encounter in life as they share their stories of departed family and friends. Their lost relationships can and will live on in their hearts and soul and memories, but the pain of not having them with us in this world is a daily test to endure.

I know the pain from being connected with family and friends who have dealt with, or are dealing with cancer; the surgeries, the chemo, the radiation, the uncertainty, the physical and psychological impact to lives over extended periods of time.

Have you witnessed death by cancer? Have you been near the painful path of therapies, extreme weight loss and then the loss of life spirit? This is ugliness in the most extreme of terms.

I know the pain through the realization that there are many, many others in the world who also know and experience this pain.

In severe contrast to the pain I associate with cancer and my reasons for riding in the Pan Mass Challenge, there is an enjoyable aspect to riding that I look forward to each year.

I enjoy the training and preparation in the months leading up to that August weekend. From early April through May, June and July, I struggle to find a rhythm to scheduling rides around family, work and home responsibilities. I deal with the all-too frequent Spring rain showers, brutally humid New England summers, and steep hill/mountain courses, all the while enjoying the outdoors and the passing miles.

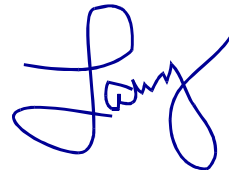
I enjoy communicating with my many supporters as I work to fulfill the financial commitment, especially since the PMC in their magnificent efforts to support the Dana-Farber Institute continues to increase the minimum pledge each year. I love receiving the personal notes scribbled onto my pledge sheet or the letter or card describing your relationship with cancer and urging me on. I am touched by these words and they inspire and motivate me to face the training challenges and to proudly represent you in the PMC.

Finally, every August when the PMC rolls around I get to see friends from previous years. I regroup T.O.G.W.G.F.I.T.W.A.M. (Three Old Guys Who Get Fat In The Winter And Meg) I hear Bud sing one of his magnificent ditties. I get to interact with the energetic and supportive volunteers at registration and the support stations along the route. I enjoy the good food prepared under massive tents along with a couple of cold beers after Saturday's long ride. Hopefully, we are sitting under a comforting Cape Cod sun and not rain. There is the wonderfully rejuvenating massage. I revel in the speed of a 20-30 rider pace line. I face off with "Marcel's Hill" and the feelings of extreme lactic acid build up as I surge to the top. There are all of the nearly 200 miles and the emotional finish at Provincetown.

What a wonderful world this is to have an event that presents the experiences of both pain and enjoyment! This is a life I love, one filled with gifts and challenges. It is so very exhilarating!

Why do I ride?

I ride because life is a gift and a challenge and I am (and always will be) ready to face the challenges and to be thankful for the gifts. That is why I ride.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Jenny', written in a cursive style.