

## Cancer Survivor Michael Cohen Rode his Bicycle to Inspire Others

By Jessica Logan | June 07, 2012

June 7, 2012 - Cancer survivor Michael Cohen rode his bicycle across the country this spring to inspire others dealing with the disease to keep going one pedal at a time. He started the 3,000-mile haul April 1 in San Diego where he finished his treatment for acute lymphoblastic leukemia at UC San Diego Moores Cancer Center with Dr. Edward Ball. Cohen's cancer has been in remission for six years.



During the journey across country, he stopped by the side of the road in Mississippi to take a sip of water and have a snack.

"I looked down and I saw that my legs were sunburned. I squeezed my legs and I thought, 'Those legs just took me across the country,'" Cohen said. "When I was in treatment those legs couldn't carry me up the stairs. I couldn't walk without a cane and now, those same legs carried me across the country."

He ended the journey in New York on May 11, visiting the oncologist who helped him start cancer treatment when he was diagnosed at 19 years old.

But like the cancer treatment that saved his life, Cohen questioned his ability to get through the trek across country. On the second day of the trip, as he climbed a 7,000-foot incline on his way through Arizona, he thought about stopping the ride.



"It was just like when I was dealing with the cancer treatment, I had to focus on just that one moment, that one pedal, to get up the mountain," Cohen said. "I knew that if I did not keep up my momentum, I wouldn't be able to make it."

To finance the trip, the young man quit his job and sold his car. Two friends joined him along the way,

riding seven to ten hours a day, logging about 85 miles. Another friend followed in a van with supplies. Cohen stopped off at the houses of friends and family and occasionally stayed in hotels.

Bicycling helped Cohen regain his vigor. During treatment, he could only lift a single pound weight from his mother's pink dumbbell set. Now he can lift 35-pound weights. Running tore up his knees and left him exhausted, but bicycling opened a new world of health and adventure.

Now that he has returned home to San Diego, he is continuing to work on his nonprofit, A Second Spin Foundation, which helps other cancer patients stay on track during their treatment and continue to accomplish their goals. "For dancers, we want to help them stay in class, for athletes, we want them to be able to play the sport the best they can during treatment and regain their strength after they finish."

"I would tell anyone who has been diagnosed with cancer to never let go of their dreams. Cancer is a very powerful word, but it is not strong enough to stop anyone's dreams and goals."

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