

# 50 states of Bike MS



## **One man's journey brings us closer to a world free of MS.**

by Shara Rutberg

### **Little Rock, Arkansas, 2014**

Long gray hair flying behind him, Bruce Reid sliced through the mild Arkansas air as he pedaled around a corner on the 7,499th mile of his 7,500-mile quest to complete Bike MS in all 50 states. Flanked by his wife, Linda, his good friend Mike Muraski, and several other friends and family members, he savored the sunshine along Little Rock's River Trail last Sept. 7. He could hear rock music from the speakers at the finish line. He could almost taste the burger he'd devour after the ride. Then, something went wrong.

### **North Florida, 2009**

Flash back five years: Bruce and Linda had signed up for the North Florida Bike MS: PGA Tour Cycle to the Shore, "for purely selfish reasons," says Reid, now 66. "We wanted to see if we could ride bikes from Jacksonville to Daytona Beach and back."

The challenge was par for the course for the couple, who have run marathons together in all 50 states. Bruce, Linda, their daughter Natalie, a few members of their extended family and a couple of Bruce's colleagues—from his office at Citibank where he had worked as a corporate community relations professional—entered the Bike MS event as a team, pedaled to the beach and back, and then went out for ice cream.

The following Monday at the office, two women approached Reid and thanked him "for riding for them." At first, he thought their comment was simply another expression of thanks from

donors who believed in the cause but didn't ride. "Then it sunk in," he recalls. "These ladies had multiple sclerosis. In riding for a cure, I really was riding for them."

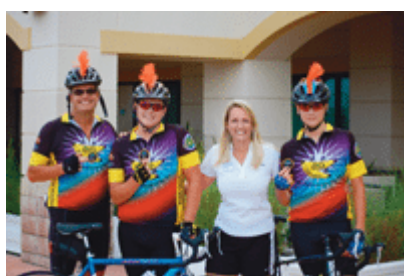
Humbled and inspired, Reid was hooked. He'd found a way to use his passion for physical challenges and the contagious enthusiasm that fueled his success at work to make a real difference. He hit the Internet and began planning a 50-state adventure, in which he would raise money for the mission by becoming the first person to ride in Bike MS in every state.

### **The entire U.S., 2009-2014**

Spinning across the country, Bruce Reid and his teams have raised close to \$800,000 for the National MS Society. "Bruce's commitment to Bike MS and the National MS Society is awe-inspiring," says Paula Eichholz, national director of Bike MS. "He continues to go above and beyond to create awareness and raise funds to change the world for people living with MS."

Corrina Steiger Madrid, the Society's North Florida Chapter president, agrees. "I've never met anyone with the same enthusiasm, fervor and creativity in fundraising as Bruce," says Madrid, who has known Reid since 2001. "If he's awake, he's thinking about how to raise money and how to encourage others to do the same."

Reid, however, is quick to share the props with fellow riders on his team, the Big Bananas. For example, Donna McAfee, a nurse, was diagnosed with MS in 2008. Since 2009, her husband, Don, has ridden in the two-day Cycle to the Shore event. Their two teenage sons, Zach and Josh, joined him in 2012. And while the McAfee men ride—raising \$8,000 to \$10,000 annually—Donna volunteers with the medical staff.



**Donna McAfee is surrounded by her family, who ride on Bruce Reid's Big Bananas team. From left: husband, Don, and sons Zach and Josh, after Day One of Bike MS in September 2014.** Photo courtesy of Donna McAfee

“I can’t begin to tell you what an asset the McAfees are to Big Bananas,” Reid says. “And the relationship the team has with Donna makes us want to do our best.”

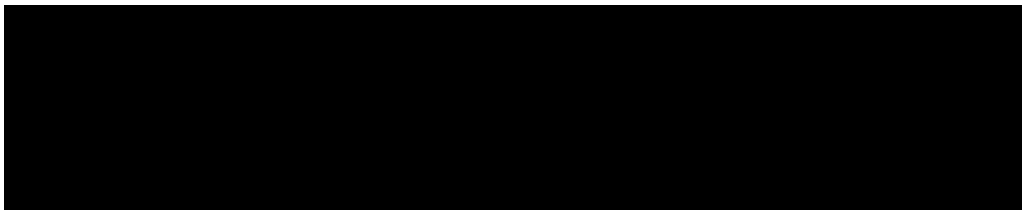
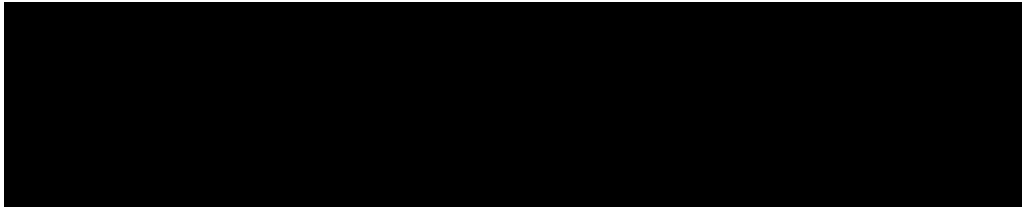
In fact, Reid worked with Bike MS organizers to add extra miles to some of his routes to raise the challenge—and awareness. Most of the 100 rides across the country offer several distance options, but Reid wanted all of his to be at least 150 miles.

“You’d think 150 miles would get a little easier over a five-year span,” says Reid. “But portions of some rides are sadistic,” he adds, laughing. Wyoming had brutal hills. Alaska’s windy, rainy, 37-degree weather was tough. On vast stretches through the Midwest, he “talked to a lot of cows.”

Then there was Iowa, where a hotel clerk woke him at 3 a.m. with the news that his car had been broken into; thieves had stolen his bike. Bruce headed to the starting line at 5:30 a.m. anyway, and within an hour, organizers and the local bike shop sponsor had a new bike for him. Reid is effusive in his praise of the bike shop employees, Bike MS staff and volunteers across the country who helped make all his rides possible.

“It’s like you’re part of a fraternity or a sorority,” he says, “where everyone’s working for the same thing: to end MS.”

That’s what powered his pedaling, even when he was sore and tired. “I’d think, ‘My pain is going away in two or three hours,’ ” says Reid. “I don’t have to live with it, like people who have the disease.” He confidently looks forward to the day when a cure will be found for MS.



### **Little Rock, Arkansas, 2014**

Back on the Little Rock River Trail, midway through mile 7,499 of his epic ride, Reid suddenly found himself struggling with each pedal stroke. “Boy, this last mile’s tough,” he thought to himself, puzzled because the terrain was flat. Then, he glanced back and down: On the last mile of his 50-state challenge, he had a flat tire. Not wanting to waste time changing it, he pumped it full of air and limped to the finish line. “It was probably the weakest-looking mile of all 50 states,” he says, laughing.

After he completed the ride, a local TV news reporter asked him what he planned on doing next. He answered without missing a beat: “MS still exists. I keep riding. And I hope others will too.”

**Shara Rutberg is a freelance writer in Evergreen, Colorado.**

To learn more about Bike MS or to register for an event near you, visit [BikeMS.org](http://BikeMS.org).